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[THE MYSTERY AGAIN.]

MAURICE DURANT.

CHAPTER VIII.

Oh, Love was once a little boy,
And oftentimes a fool;
Yet they who'd gain experience
Must learn it in his school.

FILLED with curiosity though they were the inhabitants of Grassmere had to restrain it in the direction of the Rectory, for nothing could be more mysterious, silent, or unsatisfactory than the conduct of its owner.

Since his appearance in the church he had been seen but twice—once when he had traversed the village in search of an old woman who had been hopelessly dumb for years, and to whom he consigned the care of the Rectory—and again when he visited the carpenter with instructions to replace the broken wicket with a strong oaken gate and the glassless window panes with blackened wood.

With the exception of these repairs, if repairs they could be called, the Rectory underwent no other renovation for its master.

Two rooms were cleaned from their time-honoured dust, some of the old oaken furniture with its faded velvet and armorial bearings carried into them, and in these Maurice Durant lived, buried from the world.

Since his curt refusal of the first invitation Sir Fielding had deemed it best for awhile to leave the strange being undisturbed, although every one at the Hall and the Cottage was most anxious to see more of him, and, with the exception of Maud, continually talked of him.

She, singularly enough, kept closed lips whenever the subject was brought up, and listened sometimes with a pained flush to some remark of Chudleigh concerning Maurice Durant and his strange retirement.

Indeed Maud had undergone some change since that evening when the tall figure had startled her by its sudden appearance, and had grown quiet and somewhat pensive, sitting thoughtfully alone where she used to be singing blithely, and often relapsing

into a fit of abstraction during the meals at which she was wont to be the light and colour.

Sir Fielding was perhaps too engrossed with his beloved books and the ever-present cloud of the fore-closing mortgage to notice the change, but Chudleigh had seen it and troubled over it, but had deemed it best to let it pass uncommented on, thinking perhaps that her melancholy and depression were but the effects of the strange scene on the night of Maurice Durant's arrival.

On the Sunday following that on which Maurice Durant had preached the little church was crammed, all expecting that they should again see and listen to him, but at the end of the Communion Service the little curate mounted the old pulpit and the congregation was doomed to disappointment.

Maud, who as the service had progressed had drawn closer to Sir Fielding, drew a breath of relief not unmingled with pain when she saw that the rector would not preach, and Sir Fielding, looking down upon her face as she knelt devoutly through the valedictory prayer, saw it flush and pale by turns.

So the week wore half away with the mystery growing thicker about the Rectory each day.

On Wednesday the Honourable Clarence Hartfield provided the gossips with new material for conversation by driving through the village at break-neck pace in a gaily painted sledge, the tinkling of whose bells as they shook on the harness brought Lady Mildred and Carlotta to the drawing-room window of the Cottage.

"Dear me, there is Mr. Hartfield and the sledge," exclaimed Lady Mildred. "What a beautiful little thing it is. I had no idea he really meant to bring it, had you, my dear?"

"Oh, yes," said Carlotta; "he looked like it. Hush, here he comes," she added as the door opened and admitted Clarence Hartfield, enveloped in sealskin, his golden hair blown back from his face in waving curls by the sharp air, and his eyes—or at least that one behind his glass—bright with great delight.

"Haw! here I am, you see. What do you think of the sledge? I told the wascal who made it it was

too highly coloured, but he said 'Oh, no; can't have sledge too highly coloured,' eh! eh!"

"It is very pretty I am sure," said Carlotta. "Is it quite safe?" she added, smiling.

"Safe!" exclaimed Mr. Hartfield. "Safe! I could dwive it full of eggs. Besides, the horse is the quietest thing I ever knew. Ay, you could dwive him if you liked—would you like?"

Carlotta smiled.

"I should not mind, if there were any occasion for it," she said.

Clarence Hartfield laughed.

"She's very quiet, but she won't stand in the cold long," he said.

Accepting the intimation, the ladies left the room to don their furs.

It was certainly very delightful gliding over the ice-bound roads and flying across the lake on the very wings of the wind, and Carlotta's face grew very red and her eyes bright, in the clear, crisp air, while her lips were wreathed in oft-repeated smiles at the fervour of her companion, whose blasé manner was gradually giving way each moment to a stuttering delight that made every "r" a "w," and filled the air with his Dundreary laugh.

On their way home they met Chudleigh and Maud, who were going in the direction of the Rectory.

Lady Mildred asked Clarence Hartfield to pull up, which he did just in front of the grave face of Chudleigh and the slightly pale one of Maud.

"We have had such a delightful ride, Chud," said her ladyship, "thanks to Mr. Hartfield. Isn't this a singular vehicle?"

"Very," said Chudleigh, glancing at the gaudily painted affair. "Quite Continental. I congratulate Mr. Hartfield on the acquisition of such a curiosity, and implore him to tell me whence he procured it."

Carlotta looked up gravely at his slightly sarcastic tone, and their eyes met. She lowered hers immediately, while her cheek flushed with the slightest suspicion of crimson and he looked away with a sharp spasm of jealousy. She looked so bright and happy

—was it only the fresh air and exercise, or the congenial companionship of the Honourable Clarence? he asked himself.

"Where did I get it?" called Clarence. "Pon my word I don't think I shall let the secret out; everybody will be having a sledge," and he laughed, murmuring to himself: "That fellow's quizzing me, by Jove!"

"You need not be under any great apprehension on that score, Mr. Hartfield!" said Chudleigh, laughing at the piece of simple conceit. "Our frosts are not usually severe enough to warrant the building of such a piece of magnificence as this," and he laid his hand upon the carriage.

Meanwhile Maud was answering a question of Carlotta.

"When am I coming to the Cottage, dear? Oh, as soon as Chudleigh will bring me."

"What's that, Maud?" said Lady Mildred. "Waiting for Chud? We'll soon bring him to book. Chud," turning to him, where he stood, patting the horse's neck, "come over and dine with us to-morrow, and bring Maud. Perhaps I can prevail upon Mr. Hartfield to join us!" and she flashed round upon Mr. Clarence.

"Most happy, I'm sure," said he, with evident pleasure, while Chudleigh stood hesitating.

"Thanks, aunt; we shall be very glad, shall we not, Maud? Seven, as usual, I suppose?"

"Yes, seven," said Lady Mildred. "Now, girls, you must bring your conference to an end."

And the next minute the sledge was on its way again.

"Who is Mr. Hartfield, Chud?" said Maud as they walked briskly on.

"I don't know," said Chud, absently. "A son of the Earl of Cromwells, I think. He's staying at the Folly."

"Staying at the Folly, and driving Aunt Mildred and Carlotta," laughed Maud. "Where are his manners?"

"Perished with his sense at his birth," said Chudleigh, curtly, adding, more graciously, "Not much of ill-manners about it; Lady Mildred knows the earl and countess, and the Folly is Liberty Hall I believe to all its visitors; though I expect the Misses Gregson are not over-pleased at the deflection of this curled top—"

"Curled top, Chud!" laughed Maud. "How severe! I am sure he is very good looking—"

"Very pretty, indeed," said Chudleigh. "I have seen nothing to equal him since I poked the eyes out of that wax doll who had when you were a child; but"—and he laughed rather bitterly—"he is a fascinating fellow, no doubt—at least to judge from the happy faces of Lady Mildred and Miss Lawley."

Maud looked up quickly and read poor Chud's secret in a minute, but with a woman's wisdom took care not to let him know what she had learnt.

"I don't think Carlotta was over-joyed," she said. "She is scarcely the girl to be much flattered or delighted at the attention of such an exquisite as Mr. Hartfield seems, although he is as pretty as my poor doll."

"Did you think she looked bored, eh?" said Chud, eagerly.

"Quite as much bored as amused," said Maud, pouring balm of Gilead over her brother's wounds. "I am glad we are going to-morrow, Chud. I was afraid we should not see Carlotta for some time."

"I was over there yesterday, said Chudleigh, trying to look indifferent.

"Were you?" said Maud. "You didn't tell me, you naughty boy."

"Did I not?" said Chudleigh. "I was only just passing and—What's the matter?" he broke off to inquire as he felt Maud start, and looking down saw her staring in front of her amongst the trees.

"Look!" she said, breathlessly. "What is that?"

Chud looked, and saw the tall form of Maurice Durant leaning against the trunk of an old oak, his head bent upon his breast, one hand grasping a fowl-like piece, the other hanging white and shapely by his side.

The long cloak had been discarded for a short coat made of wolves' fur, which, flitting tightly, displayed the magnificent figure to the best advantage. The Corsican cap was still retained, but at the present moment it was lying at the feet of a huge mastiff, who, bearing footsteps, raised his head, and with an ominous growl sprang at a clear bound over the ruined hedge and stood ready to spring at Chudleigh.

At the sound of the dog's growl its master looked up, and, striding forward, uttered a command in some foreign tongue, at the same time springing over the hedge and advancing to where Chudleigh, pressing Maud to his side, stood with stick raised on the defensive.

At the sound of its master's voice, however, the dog dropped on the ground with instant and most

perfect submission, and Chudleigh, turning round with a whispered "All right, don't seem frightened," to Maud, said:

"Good-morning; that is a fine dog of yours, Mr. Durant."

Maurice Durant raised his dusky eyebrows.

"That is gracious of you, Mr. Chudleigh. Chichester, considering that my rough beast has somewhat frightened you. He is harmless," he continued, crossing to Maud, with a perceptible softening of his deep voice—"harmless as a child where he is told to respect. See!" and raising his hand he spoke again in some foreign tongue, and the dog with a whine of humility commenced dragging itself on its body towards Maud.

"You could say it as it lies now," he said, "and it would not resist. Have you recovered from your alarm sufficiently to stroke it?"

Maud looked up, and, meeting the commanding gaze of the dark eyes, felt bound to obey, so stretching out her hand she touched the dog's noble head.

Immediately the animal with a joyful short commenced licking her hand, and with all a girl's love for a big dog Maud bent down and put her arm round its shaggy neck, murmuring coaxing words which seemed to fill the dog with delight; Maurice Durant and Chudleigh looking down at the beautiful pair in eloquent silence.

"You are friends now?" said Maurice Durant, so suddenly that Maud started.

"Quite," she said, in a low voice, lifting her large eyes timidly to the weather-beaten face above her. "He is a beautiful dog. Will you tell me his name?"

"His name is Tigris—not because he is like a tiger, but because he has fought one and killed it. Hast thou not, Tigris?"

At the sound of its master's voice the animal bounded to his side, but at a gesture from Maurice returned to Maud, who had now gained an upright position, and stretched itself at her feet again.

"Do you find much sport?" said Chudleigh, glancing at the gun.

Maurice Durant shrugged his shoulders.

"No," he said, "not much. I fear I have scarcely sought it with sufficient earnestness. My gun accompanies me as a companion as much as anything else. It is an old favourite."

Chudleigh looked at the weapon of foreign make with its barrel covered with strange devices.

"There are plenty of birds in the Hall chase," he said. "Will you not honour us by thinning them? Sir Fielding took it for granted that you would consider the grounds as well as the Hall at your disposal."

"Sir Fielding Chichester is most kind, but the Rectory grounds afford me sufficient scope for what little shooting I require," he added, courteously, but with sufficient coldness to bring a hurt expression upon Chudleigh's face.

"I am afraid we shall never be able to induce you to quit your solitary life, Mr. Durant," he said, with a grave smile. "I am commissioned by my father to entreat you to dine with us to-day, but I fear there is little hope of prevailing upon you to accept such a *sous-ceremonie* invitation."

Maurice Durant's face clouded for a moment and his piercing eyes wandered first from Chudleigh then to Maud, where she still knelt at a little distance beside the dog.

Then he said, slowly, and with a sad, grave smile that gave a mournful charm to his words:

"Mr. Chichester, you are right in thinking I love my solitary life, and am loth to leave it, even for a day. I have lived by myself without a friend—save the dog there—in city and in waste—alone! Solitude has become almost a necessity to me. I am unfitted for the social life. Still, to prove to you that I am not quite the hermit and anchorite I see you half think me, I will dine with you to-night."

"You will?" said Chudleigh. "Sir Fielding will be delighted; for myself—" He stopped, for his eager manner had brought a regretful reluctance upon the dark face, and he feared that the promise would be withdrawn if he continued.

"We dine at seven," he said, "but if that is too early or a later hour than your usual—"

"My usual hour for dinner," said Maurice Durant, "is when I used it. Seven, eight, or any time will suit me equally well."

"Then we shall expect you at seven," said Chudleigh.

"I will be with you," replied Maurice Durant, and with a slight inclination he turned away.

Maud looked up and saw him walking quickly from them, and patting the dog joined Chudleigh who was standing looking after the strange being whom he remembered as the open, light-hearted boy of twenty.

"Mr. Durant has consented to dine with us to-night, Maud," he said as his sister came up and took his arm.

Maud started and looked up with a sudden flush but said nothing, and she walked on.

"Hullo!" said Chudleigh, with an exclamation, upon coming up to where Maud had left the dog, for it lay there motionless with its head turned in their direction and whining, "here's the dog," and he attempted to send it after its departing master. But the dog refused to move, wagging its tail and fawning upon Maud. "What a nuisance," said Chudleigh. I must run after Durant and tell him. It will never do to leave the animal here," and he leaped the broken hedge and walked quickly in pursuit of Maurice Durant, calling the dog, who still however stuck fast to his post beside the beautiful girl.

Maurice Durant looked around as Chudleigh, touching him on the arm, said:

"Will you call your dog? He seems to have taken a fancy to my sister and does not look inclined to follow you."

"Your pardon!" he said, raising his eyebrows, "I had forgotten the dog."

He turned and walked quickly back to the road, saying to Maud:

"I told Tigris to stay by you, and he would do so unless I recalled him until the day of his death."

Maud looked up with surprise.

"And leave you?" she said, with an innocent artlessness that was charming.

"Ay," replied Maurice. "Tigris knows that the best part of affection is obedience."

"And he would have followed me home?" said Maud, looking wistfully at the dog, who was stretched at her feet.

"Yes, and shall do so if you wish it," said its owner, reading the wistful look with a calm smile. "He is yours."

"No, no," said Maud, eagerly, even pushing the dog's head away with her tiny hand. "I would not deprive you of him. He is the only—" "being you have to love," she was going to say ingenuously, but stopped and flushed painfully.

"The only thing I have to amuse me?" he said, intentionally misunderstanding her sudden silence, and adding, with a smile, "Not so, there are still the trees and the rocks and my gun. Tigris shall go with you, and if you tire of him why he can join his master's broken fortunes again," and lifting his cap from his head he left them once more, this time unfollowed.

Maud stood looking after him with a pale face and wonder-filled eyes.

Chudleigh regarded her for a moment in silence, then with a laugh said:

"Come, Maud, and bring your prize with you. By Jove! never was anything presented with a more royal air. He is like a prince in an old-fashioned romance, and the dog is as noble."

"Not so noble as its master," said Maud, in a low voice. And Chudleigh, looking down at her lowered face, saw with some surprise that her eyes were filled with tears.

However, he merely whistled and they walked on, the dog trotting calmly by Maud's side as if it had never owned another master.

CHAPTER XX.

Now may we ever forget
The follies we commit;
Fate reaps in after years
Full harvest of our sins.

DINNER was over, and the drawing-room at the Hall was shining softly in the light of the tall wax candles, which burnt with a delicious softness that our modern acclimated eyes, accustomed to the garish glare of hideous gas chandeliers, know nothing of.

Sitting in a velvet chair, the dark blue of which made her fair skin look whiter, and purer than ever, Maud, gazing at the fire with dreamy eyes, was thinking of the scene that had occurred in the morning, and, with Tigris's head resting on her tiny foot, was weaving an imaginary history of the man who was sitting beside her father and brother in the dining-room; for Maurice Durant had kept his promise and arrived at the Hall at half-past six.

When Maud entered the drawing-room before dinner she started. The tall form, attired in an evening suit, with its grand face, from which the long, thick hair was brushed in a mass of rugged curls, leaving the forehead bare and white, looking strangely handsome, was so great a contrast to its wild, almost savage appearance of the morning.

Still, though clad in the uniform which so seldom becomes an English gentleman, Maud felt a strange pleasure in the consciousness that Maurice Durant looked not one whit less noble in the black coat of fashion than in his tunic of goatskin.

One thing that struck her at once was that, whereas her father and Chudleigh both wore a few articles of jewellery, Maurice Durant's only trinket was an antique ring, with a dull, leaden-looking stone set in it. Maurice Durant wore neither watch-chain nor of-

namented studs, his shirt, down the front of which ran an edging of foreign work, being fastened with black stones, which were certainly not ornamental whatever their intrinsic worth.

At dinner he had eaten little, and drank scarcely more than a glass of claret, and, save for a few remarks addressed to Sir Fielding, had maintained a thoughtful, somewhat abstracted silence. Still his manner and, more than all, the grand cast of his face, kept his taciturnity from offense, for it was impossible to measure Maurice Durant with the rule applied to the ordinary run of men; and, indeed, Sir Fielding was too pleased with the success of his attempt to coax his strange neighbour to the Hall to risk losing him for ever by forcing him into unwilling conversation, trusting that in time the strange reserve would melt beneath the constant warmth of noobtrusive friendship.

Besides which, Sir Fielding had not forgotten amongst his books sufficient of his knowledge of the world to be long in surmising that his guest had undergone sorrow and trial enough to warrant the strangeness of his manner and speech, so that the dinner had gone off very quietly, Chudleigh and Sir Fielding carrying on a rambling conversation, Maurice Durant breaking in suddenly with a question or remark, always to the purpose, and Maud speaking seldom and listening when Maurice spoke with a rapt attention.

After she had withdrawn to the drawing-room Sir Fielding rang the bell for a particular old port, but Maurice Durant declined any more wine.

"If you will not taste my old port," said Sir Fielding, smiling, "you will have some more claret and a cigar."

But these also were declined, and, after a glass with Chudleigh, Sir Fielding led the way into the drawing-room.

Tigris rose as his master entered, and sprang towards him; but, holding up his hand, Maurice Durant spoke two words in the same language in which he had bidden him follow Maud, and the dog returned instantly to its place.

"That's Corsican, is it not?" said Sir Fielding, who had caught the words.

"Yes," said Maurice Durant. "Do you speak it?"

Sir Fielding shook his head.

"No, unfortunately," he said; "but I chanced to know the two words you spoke. Is the dog Corsican?"

"Yes," said Maurice, almost curtly, and, turning to a picture, changed the subject by saying, after a few minutes' examination: "A Carlo Dolci?"

"Yes," said Sir Fielding. "It is good, is it not?"

"Very," was the reply. "It is the finest head I have seen of his save one that hung above an altar in a small Florentine chapel."

"There are several good pictures in the gallery," said Chudleigh. "Would you like to see them?"

"Much," said Maurice Durant, "if it would not be giving you trouble. I am fond of pictures."

"And music?" added Sir Fielding, interrogatively.

"And music," assented Maurice Durant, his face lighting up suddenly. "Had we more music the world would be a brighter one."

"And a better," said Chudleigh, ringing the bell as he spoke.

"Is there a fire in the gallery?" asked Sir Fielding of the footman who appeared.

"Yes, sir," said the man. "Mr. Chichester's instructions were that it should be lit during the frost."

"Ah, yes; I had forgotten," said Chudleigh. "Shall we go there? Come, Maud."

The three made their way through the hall and up the spacious oaken staircase to the long gallery lined with various pictures and the family portraits.

Maurice uttered a low exclamation of pleasure and commenced examining them—Sir Fielding, pleased at his evident appreciation of the really beautiful collection, standing at his elbow.

"Ah!" said Maurice, suddenly pausing before a small picture representing Death as a skeleton stooping to take a child from its cradle. "I saw that picture painted."

"Indeed?" said Sir Fielding, his face kindling eagerly. "It is one of Fredliano's—at least, I thought it for one of his."

"It is his. 'Poor fellow!' replied Maurice Durant. "His best and his last. Do you notice that left hand corner where the shadow of the skeleton falls? That is not quite finished. The light wants tinging down, and the drawing is somewhat imperfect. Poor Fredliano! The day not apart for the finishing of that corner he was lying in his life-blood up in the garret to which the woman he loved had brought him by her peridy!"

As he spoke Maurice Durant's face became sadder even than its wont, and the rugged forehead grew more marked.

"I was with him," he continued, his voice growing dreamy and soft, and speaking as if he were commun-

ing with himself, "I was with him when the picture was commenced. He would have dashed it aside ere the first lines were filled in, but I stayed his hands, for work with him went by fits and starts, and—say, ah!—it was from one fit into another. Impulse, impulse—nothing but impulse! Before the skull was finished, just as his picture grew dear to him, he met Mabelle Negarno. You have heard of—Ah, well, what matters it? Fredliano fell, like all the world, at her feet; but he, being a painter, loved in earnest, and—The corner is unfinished yet; and, if I remember rightly, there should be some spots of blood at the back of the canvas," and in his strange, abrupt way he seized the picture and turned it, then, pointing one finger at five red stains on its back, let it swing round again in silence.

Sir Fielding and Chudleigh said nothing. Maud sighed, and, hearing her, Maurice Durant turned sharply, as if he had been unaware of her presence.

The girl read the look rightly, and, growing pale, shrank closer to her father with an air of singular humility.

For some few minutes Maurice Durant examined the pictures in silence, moving slowly on. But coming upon the grand organ, which stood in a recess built in the middle of the gallery, he exclaimed, with an unmistakable air of pleasure:

"An organ!"

"Yes," said Chudleigh. "I must crave your forgiveness for not mentioning it before. I ought to have known you would like to see it."

Maurice Durant bowed slightly.

"It is a grand one. I know the maker."

"Will you try it?" said Sir Fielding. "I fear it has lost some tone, for Maud seldom touches it and I never."

"Do you not like the organ?" asked Maurice, turning suddenly to Maud.

She started at the abruptness of the question, and hesitated as she replied, faintly:

"Yes; but I cannot play it well enough, and it seems almost wrong to trifle with its grand music."

Maurice Durant looked at the pale face with a sudden interest.

"Will you play for me?" he said, gently, fixing his dark eyes upon hers.

She would have given worlds to be able to refuse, but she could not, for the request, soft-toned as it was, sounded like a command.

Trembling in every limb, and flushing for an instant, she sat down to the instrument and played a "Gloria," her quivering fingers almost refusing to press the keys.

Maurice Durant's face grew thoughtful as the music swelled out, and when she had finished he inclined his head gravely with courteous thanks.

"Your objection to the instrument would soon lose its colour did you but play oftener," he said.

"If I were sure—," she hesitated, flushing at his mild praise.

"You may be," he said, laying his white hand upon the carved oak of the organ. "Give it more of your love and it will give you more of its music."

"I will play more," she said, in a low voice; then, hesitating and growing paler, she said:

"Will you play?"

His eyes looked a negative for a moment and he shook his head; but suddenly he moved, and instead of turning away seated himself at the organ, playing some subtle piece of music quite unknown to Sir Fielding, who was now poor musician in theory, and the like of which for sweetness and sorrowful grandeur the listeners had never even imagined.

First there floated through the vaulted gallery a low, solemn wail, which might have been the ghosts of the departed Chichesters chanting in unison a song of the spirit world.

Mournful to a degree, it brought the tears to Maud's eyes, and caused Sir Fielding's head to droop upon his breast. Gradually it swelled out into a burst of grand harmony, that rang echoing and re-echoing like the joyful acclamation of a choral multitude, then suddenly changed to a soft, delicious melody born of a dream, and so, gradually growing lower and more mournful, died away like the sighing of a summer breeze.

For a second there was a dead silence, the steady, subdued light falling upon the magnificent head of the player as it bent over the instrument, and upon the beautiful one of the young girl, also bent—but to hide her tears. Then Sir Fielding rose from the seat he had dropped noiselessly into, and advanced towards the organ.

Maurice Durant started at the sound of his footsteps and rose, turning his face, upon which rested such an expression of perfect serenity and peace as might have befitting a saint, but seemed marvellously strange upon those sorrow-marred features.

"Thank you, thank you," said Sir Fielding, in a low voice. "I never imagined anything so beautiful."

"Not I," said Chudleigh, coming from behind, his face likewise moved. "Savory Mr. Durant, you must be the most glorious organist that ever lived!"

The musician shrugged his shoulders, his face having lost the softness and grown as stern and impassive as ever.

"You have only to visit any Italian cathedral to hear better playing than poor mine," he said. "Your organ is a fine one; it should never be silent a day."

"It never should be if I had my choice," said Sir Fielding, eagerly, "and you should be its interpreter, Mr. Durant. It is waste of words to assure you that the greatest service you can do me is to use the Hall and everything pertaining to it with the utmost freedom. Beside the organ I am afraid we have nothing to tempt you in the slightest; but if that does let me entreat of you not to resist it."

Maurice Durant bowed his head.

"Your hospitality is Arabian," Sir Fielding, he said. "But, as regards the organ, let me remind you that you have one who can interpret it nearer home," and he turned with a slight smile to Maud, who was standing with her hands clasped, gazing thoughtfully at the keys, her ears drinking in eagerly the tones of Maurice Durant's voice.

She looked up with earnest eyes, in which the tears still glistened, and, shaking her head, said:

"I shall never touch it again. It would be desecration."

He shook his head.

"You make me regret my little theme," he said. "If you will retract your declaration and will permit me I will send you the score for it."

She looked up with a flush of pleasure.

"If you will send it me I will try to play it," she said, earnestly.

"Good," he said, smiling. "It is a contract. I will write it for you to-night."

"Ah," said Sir Fielding, catching at the admission, "then it is your own composition."

But there came no reply, and Sir Fielding, regretting his hasty speech, recalled attention to the pictures. But canvas, glowing as it might be, was but poor game after the rich repast they had enjoyed, and, although Maurice Durant seemed willing to examine the masterpieces closely, Sir Fielding was anxious to take him into the library and Chudleigh to get him to the piano.

Maud had sunk into a seat and let them go on without her. She could still see them and hear every word spoken however.

"That is a fine piece of colouring," said Maurice Durant, looking at a dark Dutch landscape. "You have a fine collection, Sir Fielding," he added, "the older ones especially."

"The more modern ones are in the smaller corridor leading to the library," said Sir Fielding, eagerly.

"There are some there you would recognise, I have no doubt. Shall we go?—that is if you are not wearied."

And he led the way down a smaller oaken staircase than the one they had ascended by.

"This is the nearest way to the smaller gallery," said Sir Fielding. "It—," He broke off suddenly to turn round with astonishment, which soon changed to alarm as he saw Maurice Durant, who had not yet commenced descending, leaning against the heavy balustrade in an attitude of terror or some other strong emotion, his face livid as death, even to the lips, and his eyes, which were fixed on a small painting of a woman's head, all ablaze with light.

Chudleigh turned at the same moment, and uttering an exclamation of alarm hurried to Maurice Durant's side.

At the same moment Maud sprang from the recess.

"Papa, papa," she cried, in agony. "He is ill, he is dying!"

And as if forgetful of everything but the distorted face she flung herself on her knees and seized Durant's hand, which hung rigid and lifeless at his side.

At the sound of her voice, and still more at the touch of her trembling hand, the stricken man lowered his eyes from the staring, mocking ones of the picture, and with seemingly a tremendous effort overcame the thralls which bound him.

Standing upright and pressing his closed hand against his heart, he turned with a smile upon his curved lips to the terrified Sir Fielding, who exclaimed:

"Good Heavens! What is the matter? Are you ill, Maurice?" using in the excitement of the moment the simple name that had once been so familiar.

"A mere trifle," was the reply, in hoarse yet regular tones. "I am unfit for polite society, Sir Fielding; I frighten it. A mere nothing," he continued, holding up his hand with a gesture almost of command as Sir Fielding was about to speak. "A sudden pain at the heart with which I am on intimate terms. I beg you not to distress yourself farther concerning it; it is the veriest trifle, the merest puff of wind—"

And, for the first time since they had seen him, he laughed a low laugh of strange, subtle music that thrilled through them somewhat as the wailing of the organ had done.

"And now for the smaller corridor," he said, abruptly. "You have piqued my curiosity, Sir Fielding, and I am anxious to satisfy it."

And he turned aside without glancing even in the direction either of the small picture before which he had succumbed or at the beautiful girl who had flown to his side and who stood at a little distance gazing on his face with a reverent solicitude. Perhaps the avoidance on both sides was intentional.

It was midnight. The Hall was dark, its guest had departed for his own house—the dreary Rectory—which looked more ghostly than ever with its one solitary, dimly lighted window, behind which paced to and fro the strange owner.

The broad brow was more marked, the thin lips sterner and more unbending, and the eyes fiercer yet sadder than ever, as, never pausing in his monotonous striding up and down the chamber, with its faded old-world furniture and worn tapestry, its rows of dust-covered, carved book shelves and rust-eaten armour, he muttered:

"To the ends of the earth, even here, she follows me! Oh, Heaven! how dire is thy vengeance! Here, where I had flown for solitude and refuge—here, where I had meant to dwell apart from all—here, within the shadow of the noble house I have brought to ruin and desolation—I find her gibing, mocking, fiendish face."

Here the bitter soliloquy broke off while the speaker hid his burning eyes in his clenched white hands and groaned.

But presently the voice, which rose and fell with a low, tremulous sound, like the cry of a being in mortal agony, caught up the thread of thought and spun it into words again, the commiseration unconsciously using the sweet-toned "thou" and "thy" which had become familiar to him by his long sojourn in foreign lands.

"Whither wilt thou go, Maurice Durant? Whither wilt thou go to forget thyself and the dreaded past? In the frozen seas thou wouldst see her face reflected on the ice; in the desert thou wouldst see it traced in the sand! Pledge of what avail is flight? Thou canst not fly from thine own black heart! Thou canst not escape from thine own memory. No, no, a thousand times no, no. The past bears bitter fruit—deadly wine which thou must drink to the dregs. And yet how hard! oh, Heaven, how hard! How different might have been thy lot. Thou idiot, thou idiot! didst thou never dream of some fair face like that of the sweet, pale lily that caressed thy world-worn hands to-night? Oh, Heaven, if thou hadst thy dream would have saved thee!"

Then came another pause, but the voice, this time slower, softer, yet with more of pain in its determination, breathed forth:

"Thou must go, Maurice, before the ill is done; the sweet face is creeping into thy heart, and the sweet girl-eyes already bear within them the dawning of love. Love! oh, bitter mockery that so pure a being should love thee, Maurice Durant. She must not, she shall not," he continued, throwing up his hands and gasping as if for breath. "Save her, Maurice; fly and save her if thou wouldst not merit the destruction which awaits thee!"

(To be continued.)

THE EXHIBITION OF 1873.—Silk forms one of the industries selected for next year's exhibition. It is proposed, in order that the class may be completely represented, to admit specimens of sewing and embroidering machines which possess special features of novelty and excellence in the working of sewing silks upon different materials. Ancient silk and embroideries manufactured before 1800 will also be admitted for comparison with similar modern manufactures.

"THE SMITHS."—John Smith—plain John Smith—is not very high-sounding; it does not suggest aristocracy; it is not the name of any hero in die-away novels; and yet it is good, strong, and honest. Transferred to other languages it seems to climb the ladder of respectability. Thus in Latin it is Johannes Smithus; the Italian smooths it off into Giovanni Smithi; the Spaniards render it Juan Smithes; the Dutchman adopts it as Hans Schmidt; the French flatten it out into Jean Smeet; and the Russian sneezes and barks Jonloff Smittowski. When John Smith gets into the tea trade in Canton he becomes Jovan Shimmit; if he clambers about Moun the Icelanders say he is Jahne Smithson; if he trades among the Tuscaroras he becomes Ton Qua Smittia; in Poland he is known as Ivan Schmittiweiski; should he wander among the Welsh mountains they talk of Jihon Schmidt; when he goes to Mexico he is booked a Joutli F'Smitti; if of classic turn and he lingers among

Greek ruins he turns to Ion Smilktion; and in Turkey he is utterly disguised as Yoe Seef.

TERRIBLE FALL FROM A BURNING BALLOON.—The American papers to hand by the steamer "Sootia" contain accounts of a frightful accident which occurred at Dekalb, Illinois, on the 26th October. It appears that a Mr. Denniston, an aeronaut, who had advertised that Mr. Louis Denham would make an ascension that afternoon, was inflating his monster balloon, "City of New York," and had nearly completed the process, when smoke was observed to be escaping from the top of the balloon. Quickly the about went up, "The balloon is on fire," and as the people near by began to retreat the horses were all driven from the scene to escape all danger. Scarcely had the flames burst out when the balloon shot away, carrying with it Mr. Michael M'Mann, who was assisting in the work of inflation. Being near the basket as it started off, he became entangled, and hanging with one foot inside the basket, his hands holding to the ropes, he thus ascended for upwards of 100 feet, and regained a position in the basket; but it again hung sideways, and in another minute M'Mann was hanging to the ropes at a height of upwards of 300 feet. Now his strength gave way and he let go. He descended to the earth nearly in a standing position, until when near terra firma he fell backward, striking the ground with his back with such force as to produce a concussion heard for some distance. His death was instantaneous.

JUST ONE THOUGHT OF MOTHER.

WHAT though we cannot remember
Infancy at play or rest,
Yet we know we once were edened
On a proud, glad mother's breast,
With her fond arms round us folding,
With devotion in her eyes;
For the little gift her whole heart
Throbbing thanks unto the skies.
Oh, that mother-infant vision!
O'er health's roses what her joy;
What a fear at their least fading!
How she clasped the girl or boy!
Well or ailing, for their future,
As she laughed or trembled there,
All her being, with the father's,
Was in its dear self a prayer.
Men and women, in this vision
Not sure proof in every part
To us of the endless value
Of the human mind and heart!
Such care ever must be hallowed
While it is upon our sod,
'Mid Evengals that show tenderness
Touching of the hand of God!
In our life's unceasing battle
May not thoughts of it restore
Courage, if we ever falter,
Making us strong as before?
And what shield against temptation
Can be surer here than this—
Just one thought of how that mother
Gave full many an angel kiss?
Then in that divine, sweet vision,
As in a seraphic spell,
Let all human hearts for ever
With Religion's signet swell—
Signet planted for the Eternal
On the fountain-head of Time,
While the Mother, Babe and manger
Heavens in Judah's clime.

W. R. W.

SCIENCE.

ALLEGED SUBSTITUTE FOR QUININE.—M. Gustavo Doray, a pharmacist, residing at St. Lô, has addressed to the Academy of Medicine in Paris a note on the febrile and anti-periodic properties of the *Laurus nobilis*. He states that Drs. Letouze, Albert, and Scelles, of Moudesert, have given it in thirty-four cases, of which twenty-eight were successful; some being cases of pernicious intermittent and others of obstinate ague. The medicine is given in the form of a powder of the dried leaves, one gramme of which is administered two hours before the expected paroxysm. The Academy has appointed a Commission, consisting of MM. Mialhe, Goble, and Bussy to report on the value of the remedy.

A HYGIENIC DRINK.—This may be made by about two tea-spoonsful of oatmeal and a tumbler of water. It is said to be the best drink labourers can use, at once nourishing, unstimulating and satisfying. And it is coming into use in establishments where men work much in the heat. It has long been used in glass factories and iron foundries of Europe. In the Brooklyn Navy Yard it is a great favourite, two and a half pounds of oatmeal being put into a pail of moderately cool water. It is said to be better than

any of the drinks made with vinegar, molasses, etc., which some farmers use in the harvest field. A well-known medical writer says that "from it is obtained power to sustain the exhausting influence of perspiration." Indeed it has often been tried with great satisfaction, and we commend it to the attention of our hard-working friends in the harvest field.

EXTINCTION OF FIRES.—A new process for the instantaneous extinction of a conflagration is said to have been recently experimented with at Paris, and with entire success. M. De la Vielle Montagne, chemical manufacturer, of Amiens, has, it appears, discovered a resinous substance which is quickly soluble in fresh water. Such a solution, employed for the service of the ordinary fire-engines, is stated to produce the following effects:—The water is prevented from conversion into steam by the heat, and thus effectually penetrates and wets the bodies on which it falls, avoiding all the ordinary phenomena of calefaction in similar cases, by which the action of pure water is so notably neutralized. Moreover, the resinous matter would appear to give rise to dense volumes of smoke, unfavourable to flames and combustion, or even ignition. Without further conclusive evidence on a large scale, however, we hesitate to accept this homoeopathic treatment as a practical solution of a difficult problem.

POTATO DISEASE.—Mr. Andrew Cross, the well-known electrician, ascertained by repeated experiments that negative electricity was the most powerful means of setting up putrefactive action in all substances capable of it, while positive electricity acted as an unfailing antiseptic. A piece of meat placed on a glass dish, and charged with positive, would remain perfectly sound for almost any length of time, while if charged with negative it was putrid in a few hours. He actually tried the experiment on alternate rows of potatoes in the same garden, and while the positive wires kept their rows quite sound he was able to set up the potato disease in all its intensity in a few hours by introducing wires charged with the negative. There is a fact in connection with this subject which I have myself observed for the last twenty years, which seems to lead to the same conclusion, to a certain extent at least. I have noticed that the state of the potato crop is intimately connected with the state of the weather in July, especially in the latter half of the month. If the month of July is dry the crop is almost invariably fairly sound and good; but if there is heavy rain, especially if accompanied with thunder and lightning after the 10th or 12th of the month, the disease is sure to appear very soon after. This was notably the case this present year, some of the most tremendous thunderstorms we have had, which extended almost all over the country, having been in the latter part of July. I have no doubt whatever that the cause of the disease is electric influence.—G. N.

EMBALMING.—M. Gaunal's system of embalming by injection, described as simple, easy, and inexpensive, an improvement on the ancient and costly system, producing neither fear nor repugnance, chanced to be made known to M. De Quelen, inducing him to leave directions that after his death his body should be embalmed by injection. His body, which was admirably preserved, was visited by all Paris, and the method adopted for embalming it by M. Audigier at once became popular. M. Gaunal's plan was to open the jugular or carotid artery; his successor, M. Audigier, opens neither artery nor vein. He introduces his preserving liquid through the mouth into the larynx, pouring it through a funnel, and when he has made about two glassfuls (a half-litre) penetrate into the organism the corpse is surrounded with a vegetable powder, impregnated with the same liquid, in the midst of the tomb. Not only is the preservation complete, but the body becomes completely mummified, and acquires a hardness which may be compared to wood or stone; the skin retains the colour it had at the time of death, and the features preserve their natural expression. But, what is most astonishing, this wonderful preservation is produced in deal coffins, badly fitted, badly joined, placed in a damp situation, in contact with atmospheric influences of all kinds. These facts are stated in the official reports of very competent and very conscientious medical men. In all experiments which have been tried bodies preserved on M. Audigier's plan have remained preserved for one or several years, and the official reports are unanimous in acknowledging that such an easy method of embalming is of great utility to the public; families may like to have the bodies of their relations brought from foreign lands; the bodies of unknown persons can thus be preserved for identification; bodies destined for dissection can be kept from decomposition. Audigier's method of embalming is exclusively carried on in Paris by M. Bayle, Rue Caumartin, who, out of respect to religious societies, offers to embalm gratuitously all priests or members of religious orders, either male or female, who die in Paris.



[THE OLD FISHERMAN'S OPINION.]

SECRET OF SCHWARZENBURG.

CHAPTER XIV.

Sorrow breaks seasons and repose hours.
Makes the night morning and the noontide night.
Shakespeare.

THE night, filled with excitement and alarm, general consternation and perplexity, slowly slipped away, and a golden sunrise broke radiantly over the little island which was crowned by the house from which the Humming-bird had vanished.

Somehow one and all seemed to feel assured that the welcome daylight would disperse the nightmare terror which had confronted them through the sleepless hours of the night.

The Foss family gathered together in a pale, scared group, talking in low, stern accents, while Nat paced to and fro with lowered eyes and knitted brow.

Penelope was not there, she had been wandering tirelessly and fearlessly over the rocks, into the very breakers which flung up their foaming columns on the northern shore, and she was still searching bush and thicket, calling in low and passionate entreaty upon Leina's name.

"It is useless to give farther attention here," said Nat, coming up to Paul and Urban Foss. "Whatever has taken those girls away has removed them safely from this vicinity. I propose to go and give the matter at once into the hands of the proper authorities. It is the surest and speediest way of finding them."

Paul and Urban looked at each other gloomily. "I suppose there is no other way," said Paul, wearily; "but the publicity will be very trying."

Here Theodosia rushed forward, exclaiming: "A boat has pushed off from the other shore. Don't you see a woman's shawl fluttering? Oh, they have found her! She is coming back!"

Nat sprang upon a rock, and flashed an eager glance across the water.

"Yes, yes. I do believe there are two women there, and a man rowing them. Oh, Heaven be praised!" Rhoda took up the glad cry, and fell into an hysterical passion of weeping.

The whole group hurried down to the landing, and the joyful talk reached Penelope's ears, and she came bounding around the point, her eyes glistening with a wild, feverish glare that made them seem unnaturally large as they looked forth from the ghastly face.

"She is coming. Oh, Penelope, she is coming!" exclaimed Rhoda.

Theodosia gave the speaker a sharp glance and an angry push.

"Leave her alone. All this trouble comes out of Penelope's fine management. If the girl be really lost, my curse shall follow my father's."

Penelope shivered and rushed up to Nat.

"Is it true? Is she really coming?" she asked, breathlessly.

"It looks like it," returned Nat, in his gentlest tone. "Don't you see the boat yonder? There are two women in it certainly."

But as the boat came within nearer vision Nat's heart sank again. If those bowed forms were the straight, slender figures whose graceful carriage identified them always before their countenances were visible, what awful thing had happened to Leina and Serena? He spoke not a word of alarm however.

It was Penelope who cried out first, in sharp, agonized tones:

"It is not Leina! Oh, Heaven, have mercy! it is not Leina!"

A brief time longer and there was no opportunity for doubt. No, it was not Leina, nor was it Serena.

A stout-armed man, a stranger, was rowing two old women, who seemed quite as agitated as the group on shore.

The pale, mild-eyed old lady at the bow rose up before the boat touched the shore, and, stretching out her arms, asked, piteously:

"Do you know anything about my grand-daughter? Is Serena here? Serena has not come home, and I am frightened about her."

"Serena!" exclaimed Theodosia Foss, harshly; "what matters about Serena? She deserves whatever fate has come upon her. She led Leina into this trouble. Would to Heaven we had never heard Serena's name!"

Poor Madame Peyron started at the fierce-eyed, grim-looking woman in frightened dismay.

But Nat hastily interposed, and hurried down to the boat to assist her trembling steps.

"Do not heed such ungracious words. Madam, your grand-daughter was in no wise blameable. She was everything good and gentle and lovely. But, alas, you find us unable to explain her mysterious absence!"

And then in gentle, respectful tones he related the strange events of the previous evening.

Good Mrs. Haynes burst into wild lamentation.

"Oh, Madame Peyron, what will you do? Whatever will you do? Oh, that sweet angel that made sunshine in every spot she showed her face. She is drowned! she is murdered!"

The poor old lady put both hands on Nat's arm to steady her wavering figure, the tears poured over her

cheeks, but she controlled herself enough to ask, composedly:

"You are good and kind, sir. Will you tell me what I must do to find the dear child? I am a feeble, ignorant old woman, tell me what I ought to do."

"Go home and try to be patient," he answered, tremulously. "Pray for her, my dear madam, and leave the rest to us. We are to search every way for Serena's friend. What means are used for one will of course answer for the other. Go back and keep yourself as calm as possible. I know what your grief is, and sympathize with it. I am Nat, the taxidermist, and you know I was very fond of Serena. I will leave no means untried to find her, and I promise to send you word the first hint of intelligence that comes to me."

The poor old grandmother turned obediently to the boat.

"I'll do as he says, it is all I can do. You may row us home again, Luke," she said, mournfully.

"And try to keep up a good heart. Believe me everything shall be done that can be," repeated Nat.

"What makes you so interested, sir?" demanded Theodosia, suspiciously. "What are these girls to you?"

"They are my dear little friends. I loved them both," returned Nat, with dignity, "and I will do my best to save them if they are in danger, or to ascertain what fate has overtaken them. But moments are precious, and we waste them here in idle recrimination. I am going over to the town at once."

Paul and Urban Foss had been conversing together in low tones. The latter advanced again.

"I will accompany you, if you have no objection, Mr. Nathaniel. As you say the search for one is the same as the search for the other. This Serena, I understand, taught a school over yonder, and is therefore comparatively well known, while our niece, of course, is a perfect stranger away from the island. Would it not be well then to give prominence to Serena's name and description? We shall offer a liberal reward, of course—as much and more indeed than our means warrant. But let it be offered for the recovery of the schoolmistress and her friend. Your own purse, I judge, will hardly warrant much outlay. Let our reward go for the pair."

Nat nodded his silent acquiescence.

"The man is a brute who wants a reward for such a deed," quoth a grizzle-headed old fisherman standing near. "Them two pretty creatures! I've watched 'em often, walking below on the beach, and times enough I've said another such a handsome pair

wasn't to be found in the country. We'll find 'em Mr. Nathaniel. Yes, Mr. Foss, we'll find 'em without any reward. But it does beat all that we hain't got the least idea what become of 'em."

One of the speaker's neighbours here crowded forward.

"I've been turning over something in my mind, sirs," said he; "mebbe you'll make something out of it, and mebbe you won't. But that 'ere strange sailor that came this week, and hired me to go fishing with him, was asking lots of questions about Miss Leina, and he was always spying about up the path to Rock House. I don't know as he's anything to do with this ugly business, but I can't find him anywhere on the island, and I hain't seen him since supper time last night."

At this information there arose a little murmur of inquiry.

"What was the man like?" asked Nat.

"I'm a poor hand at describing folks, but he was an ugly-looking chap, and you never got a square look out of him, as I remember, not giving much thought, you know, except for the fishing. He said his name was Jack Robinson, which might be, and might not. Hullo!"

He said this as a man thrust himself into view from behind the ledge.

"There he is—there's the fellow now. Where in the world has he come from?"

Robinson, who was the same man who had watched Nat that day upon the shore with such malignant eyes, came along whistling, his hat pulled down low upon his forehead.

No sooner had the taxidermist's eyes fallen upon him than he turned himself about.

"Watch him without allowing him to suspect your suspicions," said he to Urban Foss.

And calling Paul he leaped into his own boat and took up the oars, taking care not to turn his face to Robinson's view.

As soon as Paul Foss joined him he pushed off.

"I don't see how one man could spirit away those two girls without a single warning cry," said Paul, looking down gloomily into the water.

Nat did not answer.

He was rowing with fierce energy, his forehead knit into a heavy frown, his eyes troubled, his lips pressed together grimly.

"I almost wish I had stayed to question the fellow," spoke Paul again.

Upon which Nat roused himself.

"You should have said so. For myself I was very anxious to get away. I know the man, and a more hardened, brutal ruffian does not exist. I knocked him down once, and spoiled a thieving, murderous project of his. If he had any object he would be just the man for such a black deed as this. I do not want him to recognize me, but I shall take care that he is watched closely, though I confess my suspicions do not point to him."

"Have you the slightest suspicion in any quarter?" questioned Paul, anxiously. "I confess I have not."

Nat shook his head, but the frown grew deeper.

"I think I shall leave you to state the circumstances to the authorities," he said, presently. "I shall run up myself to the port. I want to put a watch on the passengers in the outgoing steamers."

Paul looked up quickly.

"The steamers!" ejaculated he, his very lips blanching, and then he stopped short and looked at Nat curiously and suspiciously.

"Yes," returned Nat, calmly; "that is the route refugees from justice usually take. Their first move is to get out of the country."

"Would Leina be taken likewise? Great Heavens! the mischief that may come of it!" muttered Paul, wiping his clammy forehead. "Theodosia was right. After that warning we should not have left her out of our sight for a single moment, day or night."

Nat leaped ashore the moment they touched the beach, and, bidding Paul precede him up the path, he hurried to the cabin of a clam-dredger just in sight.

The man was just bringing up some young lobsters caught by his trawl, and turned respectfully when Nat called to him.

"Mills, do you remember the young gentleman you brought over to the island—the stranger who wanted me to get him a collection of birds, you know?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Nat, I remember him."

"You are almost always here when boats come and go from this side. Did you see anything of him yesterday?"

"To be sure I did. He came over with White, the fisherman, and went off up the village."

"He did not come back with White, though I had reason to expect him," spoke up Nat, sharply.

"No, sir, he didn't," said Mills, digging one brown hand into the shock of sandy hair under his torn

straw hat. "I'd a plaguy sight rather he's seen him do so than as he did go."

"How was that?" demanded Nat, pulling desperately at his neckcloth as if something were strangling him there.

"He went with the pretty schoolmarm, with Miss Serena, sir. He looked mighty pleased about it, and too handsome by half for my liking. It isn't much good for a pretty girl like her to be listening to the idle talk of these fine foreigners; now is it, Mr. Nat? I wish you'd blint it to her, for she's a good girl. Nell thinks she's an angel without wings."

"He went with Serena?" ejaculated Nat, hoarsely. "How had he seen her? Where had he made her acquaintance?"

"It's more than I can tell you, sir, but for all that they seemed to understand one another very well. I saw them again when I went out to the nets, and they had taken a pretty long course to make the island, and her pleasant laugh came over the water to me, and I says to myself: 'You dear little Serena, you are having a nice time, but I hope there's no snare set for your innocent feet. It won't do for a pretty thing like you to trust too much to these foreign jackanapes.' That's what I thought, sir, and I'm glad as I've had a chance to speak about it to you, who she calls her friend, and who I know is her friend."

"A snare indeed!" groaned Nat. "The treacherous scoundrel!"

"Eh?" ejaculated Mills, staring blankly at the speaker.

"She is missing, Mills. Serena has not been seen since last evening. She and her boat and a young girl who went to meet her are all missing."

"Heaven save us! and what does he say about it? He can't deny my seeing them together."

"He is not to be found. I cannot find a trace of him. Mills, look out for any track of him, will you? and when I come back let me know if there's anything discovered. You shan't lose by it."

"Bless your soul, I wouldn't mind losing if I can be of service. The pretty schoolmarm missing! Nelly will cry her eyes out. She's just got ready for school. I'll do my best, sir."

Nat hurried on to overtake Paul, and all the way he clenched his hand and ground his heel down sharply into the sand, while he thought, bitterly:

"I cannot help suspecting him, and yet it cuts me to the heart to do it. I was growing so fond of him, he seemed so frank and manly and noble hearted. Ah, what duplicity must dwell in the heart that one so young is able to deceive so thoroughly. Oh, Stephano, Stephano, it is a terrible mistake that you have made. But why has he taken both? It all puzzles and baffles me."

Paul sighed heavily as he saw Nat's gloomy face when the latter overtook him just as he entered the village.

"You have learned nothing favourable I see. Do you know I have thought of something which has almost tempted me to rush back to the island? You know that cave just beyond the breakers? I've heard the fishermen's curious stories about it, but I never cared to venture myself into that surf to get a glimpse of its wonders. What if their boat was caught in the current and sucked into the cave? Such a thing might be I suppose."

"It was the first place White and I visited at day-break," answered Nat. "The surf was too high to get into the cave, but we called and called without obtaining any answer. At low tide White will go again, but I do not think it will avail. I do not believe it is on such a track we are to look, but let us go and set a detective at work."

Paul Foss assented meekly, all the while pondering upon the oddness of his thus tacitly admitting the authority and secretly acknowledging the superior judgment of the hermit taxidermist.

CHAPTER XV.

"Heavenly hope is all serene,
But earthly hope, how bright and fair,
Still fluctuates o'er this changing scene
As false and fleeting as 'tis fair."

"It is grand and beautiful—like the Heaven which has rescued me," murmured Lady Pauline as the gorgeous hues of the setting clouds met her delighted gaze, and looking down she added, pensively, "and how insignificant and Lilliputian seems everything below us. Even the royal palace, I presume, shows scarcely more than an ant-hill. Ah, me! ah, me! Even so to the mounting soul will seem the richest honours and the most glittering goods of earthly distinctions. Why do we care for them or heed them?"

Then followed a long silence.

The aeronaut was busy with his guiding apparatus, only casting occasional furtive glances at the pale, rapt, saintly face, and she with her eyes again upon the clouds looked as if communing with angels themselves.

"I know I am right," thought the aeronaut, exultingly. "I have done a glorious deed in rescuing this beautiful woman. I am sure she is innocent and good. I suspect she is high in rank. Who knows but at last my own good fortune may dawn, and the poor fraulein spare her tender heart its worries and perplexities, and I gain means to pursue my experiments to the golden goal of my fondest wishes? Who knows but all this may come because I have helped the lady to-day?"

And aloud he added, gently:

"And now, madam, I will hear the story if you please."

She told it in low, earnest accents, the silver voice now rising rich and high with indignation and now sinking deep with horror and pathos.

And the aeronaut listened, his face flushing and paling, his eye flashing with anger and indignation or flitting over with tears of sympathy.

When at length she paused and turned her pale, sweet face upward again to the skies that shone still above their dizzy height he stretched out his hand and exclaimed, impulsively:

"Madam, my lady, I am but an humble, obscure, poverty-stricken man, but, such as I am, all that I have is at your service in this cause. I will not yield you up except over my dead body."

The poor lonely, persecuted creature seized the extended hand, and her warm tears fell upon it.

"May Heaven reward you! I dare not promise that I shall be able to; and yet, if I triumph, you shall indeed have no cause to say again you are poverty-stricken or helpless."

"Tell me the villain's name. I care not if he be even a baron. Let me know whom I must avoid and baffle."

She smiled mournfully.

"Let me have more time to think about it—not for myself, but for your safety. Let me see your good wife, and she shall say if it be right to add this heavy weight to the already dangerous course you have taken by thus generously befriending me, and in consequence of which you must avoid—kind friend, are you prepared to hear me say it must be every one? for there will be watchfulness on all sides, ay, almost as if it were the king himself."

"So bad as that?" answered the aeronaut. "Well, all the more honour and satisfaction if we succeed. It is well we have the luncheon; this wind, I foresee, will carry us much beyond our destination; but we must not risk landing in daylight. A balloon draws a crowd at any time, and it will make more stir if a lady like yourself be seen descending from it. You are shivering; and no wonder, in your unprotected state. Wrap this fur blanket around you, and tie the scarf more closely. I will descend presently to a more comfortable temperature; but just now we are crossing the towns and villages scattered along the river, and I prefer not to attract attention."

"The river! The Danube? Oh, if I might look upon it nearer! It is eighteen years since my eyes were gladdened by its sparkling beauty."

"I will discharge a little of the gas, and we will take such a glorious view as only the birds and the stars get. One day, please Heaven, I mean to be able to rise and descend at pleasure—to sail here and there through the clouds, as the ships plough the ocean, or the horsemen gallop along the land."

His eyes shone, his cheek flushed as he said it.

"You are an enthusiast in your work," said she.

"Ay, but a sad one. I shall never have the means to pursue my experiments to the extent necessary. As it is I sometimes wonder my wife does not reproach me for squandering upon my balloon the few earnings I manage to accumulate; but my faith in the ability to some time gain the glorious end never wavers. Ah! if I succeed, my name will go down to posterity, and my wife will reap a golden reward for her patience and faith!"

His whole face shone with the glory of the imagined success.

"You have done a glorious thing with your balloon already, let what other failure come that may," said the lady, gently; "and you shall not lose by it if only my prayers prevail. You have saved one to whom earthly relief seemed quite impossible and vain to hope for. Thank Heaven! I am not quite destitute, and need not tax your purse as well as your kindness. We must manage to dispose of these stones one by one."

As she spoke she drew from her bosom a small case, and, opening it, showed him a cross sparkling with diamonds, and a magnificent cluster ring of the same costly gems.

"It will indeed need caution," answered he. "It will be a suspicious thing for the poor aeronaut to offer such costly jewels even to an unscrupulous broker." Then, seeing the troubled look that flitted across her face, he added, cheerfully: "But we will find the way, never fear that. The little fraulein has quick wits—we will trust her in the matter."

"I should not blame her if she refused me a place in her house, bringing you into such danger as I do," returned the lady, gravely.

"You do not know her. Wait till you see what loving ways she has. She cannot be cross to a stray cat or a mieddlesome boy, leave alone a noble lady in such trouble as yours," the husband returned, proudly. "Shut your eyes a moment, for the descent causes a little dizziness." A moment after, he added, eagerly: "Now madam may look, and perhaps she will understand the fascination which is beyond wine and dice for the aeronaut."

"How glorious! Oh, this beautiful world!" exclaimed Lady Pauline, with as much admiration as he could desire, and then, softly sighing, she added: "How the angels must grieve to see its loveliness marred by the wicked deeds of man!"

"Ay, it is beautiful!" returned the master of the balloon; "is it not worth all the risk, all the peril? Behold! there is the river, and see how majestic is its course. The town looks like a queer colony of anthills, and if you look closely you will see what is like a swarm of gnats, but it is the people. The most majestic of all is but a mite at this distance."

"It is so long since I have seen the river and the town," murmured the lady, wistfully, and then a rain of tears deluged her face. "Oh, the crushing bereavements, the woe of wrongs, the wearing anguish I have endured since! It is almost like rising out of a grave and looking back into the world, this strange experience. I cannot realize all it means, I am numb and dazed. Eighteen years ago I also mingled in the gay crowd down there, as gay, as lighthearted and thoughtless of evil as the youngest babe that nestles in some happy mother's arms to-day. And now I am here, above the world, in the clouds, gazing down. Am I awake? am I in my right mind? Speak, answer me, I implore you."

The aeronaut took her hand in his, and, while he stroked it gently, put his fingers to the pulses, and found it leaping madly.

He reached down quietly to the basket, took out a phial, and poured a few drops into the little cup, and gave it to her.

She swallowed the contents obediently. "Now close your eyes and rest a little. The change of air and the excitement may well disturb you. It will pass shortly."

He was right. In a brief time she opened her eyes, smiled upon him tranquilly, and said:

"I am better. I think I must be much nearer the earth, for the atmosphere seems natural again. How long before we must descend?"

He had been fumbling over his apparatus, and had the loving fraulein been there she would have seen that the smile he had assumed when he turned his face towards her was an anxious and troubled one.

"I am thankful that you are better, madam. About the descent, you know, for your sake, I preferred to remain up until dark, unless, indeed, I can land in some safe and obscure place. Balloons are not yet so common but that the landing of one draws a large crowd. I wish you had a hat and veil. Your face is too remarkable to pass unnoticed."

"I can wrap my scarf about it," she began.

And she paused abruptly to catch hold of the edge of the car, which began to rock to and fro, while the balloon above oscillated still more violently.

The aeronaut sprang up, caught hold of the ropes, and swung himself up to the great globe, from which came a low, hissing noise.

He was busy there fastening his silk handkerchief somehow for a few brief seconds.

Then he came clambering down again, and seated himself once more in the narrow quarters.

"Anything wrong?" she asked, aware at length that his face was paler than it had been before.

"There is a rent in the balloon; the gas is escaping, but so slowly I hope it will not disturb us. If only we could catch another current of air," he muttered, uneasily.

"We are directly over the river. How wide and deep it looks! It is well, indeed, you hold such skillful authority over this wonderful steed!" she returned.

He impatiently bit his lip, and, though his attention all seemed to be given below, every nerve was strained to catch the slightest sound from above.

Full soon he heard the signal he had been dreading. A quick, sharp tear, and again the car rocked dangerously.

"Hold on, madam, and try to be courageous. I can no longer hide our danger from you," he explained. "For Heaven's sake hold on with your hands, and keep your breath. I expect every moment we shall descend like a stone. Heaven only knows what will be the result."

She only gave a little sob, then looked up to the sky that stretched still as far above them as if they had not mounted twice an eagle's flight above the solid lands.

"I have not surely been released from prison to die this horrible death. I have faith that we shall be preserved from harm," she murmured, softly.

There is a life-preserver under the seat. Tie it around your waist. If I am not stunned I can swim," he returned, hurriedly. "Help me throw out these bags of sand. There is not a moment to be lost, the gas is escaping more and more swiftly. Oh, my poor balloon!"

And the aeronaut groaned in anguish amid his own imminent peril at the destruction which menaced the object of his ambitious hopes and fondest pride.

Five minutes longer they swung blindly to and fro, and then the fall, the swift rush, the strangling distress came.

Lady Pauline clung desperately to her hold upon the seat, and shut her eyes, the pale lips still moving in prayers, when almost the breath seemed snatched from them.

Then the heavy shock and the merciful release of unconsciousness followed.

(To be continued.)

LORD DANE'S ERROR.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

GEORGE behaved remarkably well. He was a wonderfully sensible and precocious child, and seemed to think if he was with Perdita nothing else was of any importance.

When, therefore, he was waked by her wrapping her own cloak about him—she had previously put on his stockings and shoes without rousing him—he cuddled his little head down upon her shoulder obediently and let her carry him noiselessly out of the room without uttering a sound.

She guarded his eyes, however, from the sight of the monster before the fire.

Outside she put him down while she looked the door of her prison upon this enemy, and exultantly transferred the key to her pocket.

Then she lifted George again.

He was very tiny and slight, or she could not have carried him.

The hall was very dark, but Perdita in her excitement and hopefulness did not think of that as she walked steadily forward toward the door she remembered so well as leading into the small courtyard outside. It was six weeks since she came through it last.

Her greatest fear was lest she should not be able to get it open.

But fortunately for her the three villains above stairs had left it unfastened as a measure needful for their own safety.

As Perdita, rejoicing, pulled it open the storm which had been so long threatening burst in a flood of rain and a wild crash of wind and thunder. The lightning fairly blinded her.

She shrank back involuntarily, and the wind and rain beat in at the open door after her.

At that moment she heard a door slam somewhere in the house, and looking back beheld her three enemies standing half-way down the stairs, Mrs. Griff at their head, with a lamp in her hand.

Perdita only looked once and the wind put out the lamp while she was looking.

At the sight of her enemies Perdita, terribly startled, hesitated no longer, but plunged at once out into the storm.

As she hastened onward she held George close in her arms, the thick cloak folded over his face, so that he could neither see the lightning nor feel the wind and rain.

She scarcely dared hope that the gate was like the door left unlocked, but she darted toward it protected from the wind somewhat by the high wall of the court, and guided by the flashes of lightning.

She reached the gate and tried it. It was not fastened, but she could not move it. With the child upon one arm she was not strong enough.

A thought came to her. Why had she not taken the key from the inside of the front door and looked that upon the outside as she had the one where Grizzle was?

She turned back daringly and impulsively to do so now, but it was too late. Mrs. Griff was already in the doorway.

She saw her by the flare of the lightning, and at the same moment Mrs. Griff saw Perdita and screamed after her in a crazy manner.

The stony-visaged, stony-hearted old woman was fairly wild at the thought of losing her prey after all.

Perdita wheeled again and dashed at the gate.

She put George down regardless of his cries now, for the cloak falling upon the child was frightened.

Perdita seized the gate with both hands and wrenched at it with all her might.

It yielded a little and a little more, but not quickly enough to have enabled her to get through before Mrs. Griff could reach her had not that excited personage slipped on the wet stone steps and fallen at full length.

Perdita saw it as she bent for George. She had a flashing glimpse of Cheeny and Clover Dick too, coming tearing through the rain and wind and darkness, never stopping to pick up Mrs. Griff, who had not stirred, but rushing wildly after their escaping victim.

Perdita caught her breath sharply as she saw how desperate her chances were, how nearly hopeless the possibility of escape, with George in her arms at least.

But she would not give up, and she would not leave the child.

Clasping him close, she rushed through the gate and forward once more on the precipitous mountain road. Surely in this darkness she might evade her pursuers.

Quitting the road, she turned to the right, and ran as fast as she was able, hardened as she was.

The pursuers, Cheeny and Clover Dick, running bare-headed in the rain and wind, were too close behind her not to discover the evasion.

They turned also, Cheeny calling after her to be careful, or she'd break her neck in some hole she was not looking for—there were plenty such.

Perdita only ran the faster.

"There is nothing of the sort, or he would not have told me," she reasoned, very shrewdly; "he would rather I broke my neck than not."

However it was too unequal a race to last long, and Perdita had not got start enough to hide herself from her pursuers in the darkness. She heard them very close behind her, they would be upon her in another moment, and suddenly sitting down upon the wet ground she drew the large dark shawl she wore over her head and bent down over the child. In this position she could scarcely be distinguished from the ground, even in the full play of the lightning, and Cheeny and Clover Dick, whose eyes were not looking for her in exactly that shape, and whose speed was under too good headway to be instantly checked, mechanically avoided the supposed obstacle and ran past her some distance before they discovered that she had suddenly disappeared.

Perdita had meanwhile started up again the instant they had passed her, and ran back towards Rylands.

She had not gone yet more than a hundred rods away from it, and her pursuers would be scarcely likely to look for her in that direction.

The heart of the brave girl bounded with renewed hope as she ran towards Rylands instead of from it. She had noticed while she was wrenching at the great iron gate that there was an inside fastening which looked as if she might manage it herself, and she remembered that in the glimpse the lightning had given her of Mrs. Griff the housekeeper had seemed to lie very still.

Perhaps she was too badly injured to move without assistance.

As she ran she heard Cheeny and Clover Dick shouting to each other in the distance, and the shouts sounded farther and farther away.

Perdita's eager eyes fairly glowed in the darkness as she shot into the courtyard once more, George still in her arms.

Risking the chance of Griff being there, she felt for the fastening of the gate, and then dropping George once more upon the ground she pushed the stout bolt to its place.

Cheeny and Clover Dick might try their united strength against it now. It could not be opened from the outside.

Then she caught up George again and turned toward the house.

The storm had not at all slackened yet. Wind, rain, thunder and lightning, all were in full play still, and by the blaze of the latter she saw what made her bold, warm blood turn chill and stagnant for a minute.

It was the form of Mrs. Griff, lying upon the stone steps, just where she had fallen. The face was downward.

Was she dead?

Perdita thought not.

"She's too wicked to die," reasoned the young girl, in her quaint fashion. "She's probably in a swoon, and the sooner I get inside where it's dry and got the key turned between us the better for George and me."

She suited the deed to the word, mounted the steps and entered the house once more.

The key was in the lock, and there were in addition stout bolts.

Having secured these, the weary girl turned toward the staircase down which her enemies had come when they discovered her on the point of escaping them.

Reasoning after her usual clever fashion, she guessed that beyond those stairs was what would be particularly acceptable to her and Georgie just now—a warm room.

She saw the glow of the fire before she was half way up.

The villainous trio in their haste to secure her had left wide open the door of that room, in which they had been lurking, waiting for their wickedness to be accomplished.

Perdita uttered a sigh of heartfelt thankfulness as she entered, and, letting Georgie down at last, closed and locked this door in its turn before she would sit down herself.

There was a possibility, she knew, that Grizzle might have been let out of the room in which she had left him, and any way she felt safer with the door fastened.

The chamber in which she now found herself was a bare and desolate place enough, but there was a fire in it and a store of fuel.

There were some wooden chairs, a bed, and a table.

On the table was a basket, which upon examination proved to contain a couple of cold baked fowls, a large loaf of bread, some pies, some jam, some pickles, a little pot of butter, and materials for making tea.

The last Griffl had doubtless provided for her own refreshment. A decanter and glasses stood near the basket.

Georgie, having thrown off his cloak, was standing in his shoes and nightdress staring with wide and shining eyes at the treasures which the light of the fire disclosed.

"Georgie want some!" he eagerly suggested.

"Yes, darling," gravely responded Perdita, slicing a leg of the fowl for him, and then spreading some jam over a piece of bread also for him before she tasted anything herself, though she was nearly famished.

Georgie sat down upon the floor with his hands full in supreme contentment.

Perdita laughed as she cut some of the chicken for herself.

"It looks as if our friends had prepared to make a night of it, doesn't it, Georgie?" she observed, sportively.

Then, taking the basket upon the floor, she sat down beside the child and proceeded to make the first "decent meal," as she phrased it, that she had had for six weeks.

"It's dood," responded Georgie, emphatically, with his rosy mouth full.

Perdita had replenished the fire when she first entered, and the cheerful blaze diffused a light and warmth that were as comforting as the food.

She was drenched to the skin by the rain.

Georgie had fared better, thanks to her, though his clothes, which she had brought away in the bundle, were all wet.

Having satisfied their hunger, and got warm and dry, Perdita examined the bedding in the room, and found it to be quite clean, a fact of which she had previously stood in some doubt.

She brought it and spread it upon the floor before the fire, and she and Georgie lay down upon it.

Before she yielded to the drowsiness that was weighing down her eyelids Perdita looked at her watch.

It was only twelve o'clock.

"Clever Dick will conclude I'm cleverer than ever," she murmured, sleepily. "Mrs. Griffl may come to enough to unlock the gate, but she won't get the door open," she added, then fell asleep.

(To be continued.)

A DOUBLE HANSON.—One of the novel street sights of London just now is a new double hansom running on two wheels, but furnished inside with double seats for four persons, just as in the regular old four-wheeler. The body of the car is balanced on the same principle as the ordinary hansom to relieve the horse from the weight, and throw it almost wholly on the wheels, while John is perched up overhead as per regulation. The wheels are very small, and are fixed rather under than outside the body of the vehicle.

PALM-TREE AT ROME.—The magnificent palm-tree that has for the last thirty-five years formed one of the principal ornaments of the garden of Sig. Franz, in his Via Nazionale, at Rome, has been purchased by the municipality of that city, in consequence of the area occupied by this garden being about to be built upon. Sig. Formilli, the head gardener of the Pincio, has been superintending the removal of this tree, which is 8 metres in height and 7.8 metres in diameter, and the roots, together with about 8 cubic metres of soil, have been placed in a box, so that there will be no fear of them being in-

jured. The site intended for its replantation is at the end of the alley skirting the Villa Medici.

WARNED BY THE PLANETS.

CHAPTER LIV.

JUDITH was very busy and very happy in her new life at Ravenswood, happy in her attendance on Lady Marguerite, happy in her blissful wedded life with Hendrick. He was acting in the capacity of head groom for the earl until their return to the castle, when he was to fill the office of gamekeeper.

He was a shrewd, honest man, fully capable of discharging all the duties that devolved upon him, but a man who had no past save one star-like memory, and that was the face of the woman who was his wife. His love for her had survived the wreck of reason itself.

Not in England, perhaps, was there a happier married pair than Judith and Hendrick. They had a little room of their own in the servants' building, where they spent their leisure hours together, and it so happened that when Sir Bayard brought his valet down from London the Ravenswood housekeeper assigned him a room adjoining the one occupied by Judith and Hendrick.

Judith was very busy, as we have said, her skillful hands were never idle. When she was not employed for Lady Marguerite she always had something to do for Hendrick, and her days sped by with winged rapidity.

She had but one trouble apart from her life-long grief for her poor lost lady, as she termed the dead countess, and that was in regard to Lady Marguerite's marriage.

Lady Marguerite never alluded to it in any way in her confidence with her maid; she was very sensitive and reticent by nature, very proud and self-repressed, not at all given to speaking of her joys and sorrows.

But Judith's kindly eyes, very keen and far-sighted as soft and tender as they seemed, had divined the poor girl's secret at a glance. She knew that she disliked Sir Bayard and loved Captain Forsythe; and whether from sympathy with her young lady or from any just cause we cannot assert, but Judith herself had a growing dislike to the baronet.

"He's a bad man if ever there was one," she said, over and over again, when she and Hendrick were alone together, "and I like him less and less every time I set eyes on him. Poor little Pearl, what shall I do to save her from him?"

The wedding-day was named, the suite of bridal apartments was being refurnished, and one morning late in August the great box of bridal equipments came over from Paris, and Judith was summoned to her lady's room to assist in unpacking it.

Lady Neville was present, so was Marguerite, and the countess was fluttering about in a fever of excitement.

"There was never a finer trousseau ordered," she was saying, "not even for the royal princesses, and I'm in hopes you'll like the things, Marguerite. I paid a fabulous price for them."

Lady Marguerite said never a word. She had given up all hope, and resigned herself to her fate. On the same day that Lady Neville announced the change of her wedding-day she had an interview with her father, and it left her hopeless.

"My darling," he said, taking her in his arms and kissing her tenderly, "I am so glad you have consented to an early marriage, it was kind and obliging in you—I am sorry you could not be married at Strathpey Castle, but it doesn't matter. Your Aunt Neville informed you of my intentions in regard to your dear mother?"

Marguerite inclined her head—if her life had depended on it she could not have uttered a word.

"I have never spoken to you, Pearl, about your mother," her father went on, his voice thrilling her with its unutterable sorrow, his white, haggard face and despairing eyes a piteous sight to behold; "but what I say now I want you to remember as long as you live. She was the loveliest, the truest, the noblest woman in England, and the most bitterly wronged. I can't explain her wrongs now, I never can, it kills me to remember them now that they can never be atoned for. Little Pearl," he added, clasping her close, his white lips quivering, "you are like her. Oh, my child, I'd give my soul's salvation if we could call her back one hour!"

Marguerite wept softly, clinging to her father's breast.

"I am going to take her dear remains from the alien grave where they rest and bring them home to Strathpey Castle. When that is done my life work will be ended. You will be married, my darling, be a good man's wife, and I trust, a happy wife—that is my one comfort. I shall go away, Heaven knows where. I can't remain in England; and, Pearl, you must re-

member your mother, and keep her grave green. I will give you this now," he added, drawing a little pearl-set miniature case from his bosom, and putting it in her hand; "it is your mother's picture—there, kiss me good-bye—I start for London in an hour, and shall only return in time for your wedding."

He kissed her, and was gone before she could utter a word, and the bewildered girl sat gazing down upon the lovely face of her young mother.

Now her father was gone, and she sat there with the great box of bridal array before her, utterly hopeless.

"I really think," remarked Lady Neville as Judith was unpacking the articles, "that Sir Bayard was the happiest man I ever saw when I informed him of the change in regard to the wedding-day. He was excessively delighted! I never saw a man more in love! Indeed, Pearl, you are fortunate to have such a lover."

Still Marguerite sat silent, her hands lying limp and listless in her lap, her eyes looking far away toward the blue hills beyond the window.

Judith, busy with the packages, watched her covertly, with a keen pain at her loving heart.

If she only could save her she thought.

"Lay out the bridal dress first," commanded the countess.

Judith obeyed.

A marvel of richest white satin, with an over-dress of point lace, and a stomacher that was one shimmering mass of pearls, was then displayed.

Lady Neville uttered a cry of admiration.

"See that too," chuckled the countess, lifting the wedding veil from its gilded case, "it's worth a fortune—the very costliest veil in Paris—But, Heaven, look at Marguerite!"

She let the creamy fabric fall and hurried to the girl's side.

She had fallen back in her chair, without a word or sign, in a deathly swoon, her face as cold and white as it ever would be in the grave.

"Take her to the couch, Judith," commanded Lady Neville, quietly; "she's not quite well, and so excited too, and young girls are subject to such attacks. Now bring my salts."

The countess looked on, a sudden pang of remorse piercing her heart, which was kind and tender under all its crust of vanity and worldly pride, at sight of the young creature's awful face.

Judith, ever watchful and observant, caught the softening expression in the keen old eyes beneath the spectacles; and under pretence of gathering together the bridal display, she got near to the danger's elbow.

"For Heaven's sake, my lady," she implored, "don't let this marriage take place—don't you see it will kill her?"

But the stately old countess deigned no word or sign in reply.

"You may go now, Judith," commanded Lady Neville; "we shall not need you—I will attend to Lady Marguerite myself."

Judith could do nothing but obey.

She left the room and her poor young lady reluctantly enough, and having nothing else to do, she made her way to her own apartment in the servants' quarters.

Hendrick was out, as was usual for him at that hour, and closing the door Judith sat down in her little rocking-chair to think.

For a full half-hour she remained there perfectly motionless, her sad brown eyes riveted on the carpet at her feet, striving with all her woman's wit and ingenuity to devise some means of escape for Lady Marguerite. But the case seemed utterly hopeless.

She was on the point of rising to her feet and returning to her lady's apartments to ascertain if she were needed when a sudden murmur of voices in the adjoining room arrested her attention.

She had never heard a sound there before, and it startled her at first. But on second thought a cautious desire seized her to know who was there.

She was aware that the baronet's valet occupied the apartment, and one of those apparently silly but irresistible impulses took possession of her that we all have experienced at times. She felt anxious to know what company he had.

There was a closet attached to the lower end of her room which had been closed for some reason or other.

Hendrick had discovered it by mere chance, and slid back the moveable panel which barred the entrance.

It was closed now, but Judith arose noiselessly, and sliding back the panel entered the dark, dusty room, her cheeks tingling with shame as she did so. The plastering was crumbling from the walls, leaving the laths in many places visible.

She stooped down and peered through one of the cracks.

It was just as she supposed it would be, the plastering had fallen on both sides, and the cracks extended through to the adjoining apartment.

The girl peered cautiously through with bated breath, and, to her extreme surprise, she saw Sir Bayard Broughton.

A second glance discovered his valet and the two in earnest conversation.

Judith's curiosity was now thoroughly aroused.

Gentlemen were not in the habit of making visits to the sleeping-rooms of their valets, she argued within herself, and the baronet was there for no good.

At any rate she must know the purport of his visit if possible.

Down she went on her knees and put her ear to the crack.

It was Leonard's voice she heard.

"I've never creased my brain," he was saying, "trying to hit on some plan, but it is no go. I'm not sure about the fellow either! He looks like Sir Bayard and he don't look like him."

"He is Sir Bayard," gasped the baronet. "Who else can he be? His eyes betray him. Can't I see the mocking expression in them every time he looks at me?"

"But, great Heaven!" ejaculated the valet, who seemed to have but little respect for his master, "how can it be? Didn't I do the job myself?—didn't I run my knife through Sir Bayard's heart, and then throw him head foremost down a precipice a dozen feet deep? The fall alone would have killed him."

"Who is this man, then?" demanded the baronet. "Only last night he met me and called my name! Who is he?"

"The old un himself, maybel!" laughed Leonard.

The baronet uttered a savage exclamation.

"You needn't laugh," he cried, raising his voice a trifle in his excitement, and making his words wholly intelligible to Judith, who crouched in the dust and gloom of the closet with white lips—"you needn't laugh, for you're deeper in the mire than I am, and if you fail me now I swear you shall swing for it."

"Suppose I turn queen's evidence?" ventured Leonard.

The baronet bounded to his feet and clutched him by the throat.

"You scoundrel!" he roared, wholly unmindful of caution in his excitement, "I'll brain you upon the spot."

Leonard slid from his grasp like a serpent.

"Softly, my baronet," he said, tauntingly. "You and I cannot afford to quarrel. I only jest."

"Then don't jest in that strain again," said the baronet, resuming his seat, and wiping the great beads from his brow. "You know I've not an hour to lose, and here you sit grinning like a monkey. What's to be done?"

"What do you want done?" demanded the valet, with provoking coolness.

"I want Captain Forsythe out of my way, and out of it for good too. We shall both swing if we're left to his meroy much longer."

"I don't stand much in awe of the swinging," replied the valet; "that'll fall to your share, Sir Baronet, if the worst comes to the worst, and I shall go scot-free. All I care for is the money. Will you make it fifteen thousand if I help you in this?"

"Yes."

"And down a week after your marriage?"

"Yes."

But the baronet's eyes wore an ominous look as he promised.

Leonard arose, and shook his wiry shoulders.

"The captain goes to a supper Thursday night," he remarked, significantly—"a wine supper, at the 'Leith' hotel, with the officers from the barracks. They wanted a waiter there, and I secured the place this morning."

"You did?" gasped his master. "Why couldn't you have informed me before?"

"Time enough," responded Leonard—"business before pleasure. I generally see my way clear before I begin a job."

"Well, it is clear," put in the baronet, breathlessly. "I'll make it twenty thousand pounds if you'll do this!"

Leonard's black eyes glittered.

"All right!" he responded. "I've got the whole thing out and dried. I enter on my new duties to-morrow—a gentleman waiter—sandy hair and whiskers, white apron and all, Edward James by name. Now all I need is a moderate dose of prussic acid, or something equally effective, to flavour the handsome captain's wine. Do you happen to have any on hand? I don't care to run the risk of getting it here."

"Plenty!" responded Sir Bayard, with a hideous laugh. "Tis a convenient article I always keep."

Judith had listened to this conversation in almost breathless quiet, and now as the two men arose and prepared to leave the apartment she dared not stir lest by the slightest rustle of her garments she might warn them of her presence.

The baronet soon departed, but his valet remained, rummaging amid his effects, and chuckling and talking to himself like a madman.

Crouching on her knees, her limbs aching from remaining so long in one position, her lungs full of dust, Judith watched him and waited for him to leave.

At last he went, and she arose and made her way out, closing the sliding panel after her. In her own room, with the sunlight coming through the windows, it all seemed a horrible dream.

She had disliked and mistrusted the baronet, but she had never dreamed that he was capable of such villainy as this.

Her idea of what it all meant was very dim; she merely comprehended that Captain Forsythe was to come to harm—she had no understanding or suspicion that the baronet himself was a pretender, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

But what should she do? Lord Strathspey was in London, Lady Neville would not hearken to anything she might say, neither, in all probability, would the countess.

But Captain Forsythe must be saved. First of all she must warn him of his danger, and then—what then?

CHAPTER LV.

It is time perhaps that we should turn our attention to pretty Maggie, the old doctor's daughter, who was so unceremoniously whisked away from home and friends by the right honourable young heir of Strathspey Castle.

All efforts on the part of her friends to find some clue to her mysterious disappearance had been in vain.

Neither time nor money had been spared, and Mr. Keith had put the very keenest of detectives at work, but as yet nothing had been discovered—at least, nothing farther than the fact that about dusk on the afternoon of Maggie's disappearance a vehicle containing a gentleman and a lady, who appeared to be ill or asleep, had passed through the Perth neighbourhood.

Nothing else, no proof or possible pretext for an accusation against Lord Angus Strathspey had been elicited. Yet Doctor Renfrow did not change his mind. His first conviction remained with him. He believed that it was through the young lord's evil machinations that he had lost his child; and while he bewailed her loss in an agony that was piteous to witness the old father registered the most bitter vows of vengeance on him whom he believed guilty.

Now we will follow Maggie herself. How long she lay in the death-like trance produced by the powerful drug that had been held to her nostrils she never knew.

She awoke to a dim consciousness in the wan light of early dawn. Her temples throbbed with a fierce pain, and her lips and tongue were dry and parched. At first she fancied she must be very ill, and, thinking herself at home in her own chamber, she called, softly:

"Papa! dear papa!"

But the sound of her own voice roused her, and the horrors of the past night rushed back upon her. She struggled to a sitting posture, and gazed about her in utter amazement. She was lying on a couch, in a small, poorly furnished room, and through the half-curtained window just beyond her she could look down into the stable-yard of an inn. Where was she?

As if in answer to her anxious inquiry, a key turned in the lock of her door, and a middle-aged woman, with a florid face and a great many scarlet bows about her flaunting cap, entered with a breakfast tray in her hands.

"So yer hup, my dear, I see," she cried, nodding familiarly. "Glad to see it—which last night ye was dead beat hout, and the young gentleman so honeasy. I've brung ye a nice 'ot breakfast," she went on as she placed the tray on a chair, "which ye must git up and eat, as will do ye good, mum."

"My good woman," interrupted poor Maggie, with a gesture of passionate impatience, "will you please tell me where I am?"

"Why, bless yer, sure an' certain, ye're at the 'Lion an' the Unicorn,' which my sign will show, as 'andsome a sign too as there is in Coomberland."

"Cumberland!" repeated Maggie, catching at the word; "am I in Cumberland then?"

"That ye be, mum, in Coomberland county."

The girl was silent for a moment or two from utter terror, then she arose and approached the woman with tottering steps.

"My good woman," she began, but the landlady of the "Lion and the Unicorn" retreated step by step, till she had reached the door, then she paused, with the knob in her hand and a look of suspicious fear in her eyes.

"Easy now," she whispered, soothingly, "go and heat your breakfast like a good child, then the gentleman 'll come an' see ye—go now."

"But you must hear me," implored poor Maggie; "you must help me. I have been drugged, and forced from home and friends. You must help me to escape and you shall be rewarded. My father will make you rich if you will."

"Poor thing," ejaculated the landlady. "They all talk that way. 'Tis just as the gentleman said, her mind's clean gone. What a pity! Such a likely lass too!"

Maggie, with her quick wit and quicker eyes, caught the import of her pitying words and look.

"Do not leave me," she entreated, catching at the woman's arm. "You have been told that I am mad—it is false. I am as sane as you are. Oh, for the love of Heaven save me, help me, good woman."

But the landlady, eluding her grasp, slipped through the door, and closed and locked it after her.

"Eat your breakfast now like a good child," she called back through the keyhole.

In her impotent despair Maggie seized upon the door with both hands and shook it violently, whereupon the landlady beat a precipitate retreat.

The poor girl turned to the window with an aching heart.

Her head was still dizzy from the effects of the drug, and her eyes burned and throbbed with pain. She sank into a seat and looked down into the hostility below.

A couple of stable-boys were busy with the horses, and a man, the landlord no doubt, was sauntering to and fro with his hands in his pockets.

She essayed to raise the sash, and found that it was securely fastened.

She was a prisoner!

Despair filled her brave young heart. She thought of her fond old father, and dropping her head upon the window-sill burst into tears. How he would mourn her loss and search to find her.

What consternation must have reigned when he returned from Ravenswood and found her gone.

Thinking it all over, she remembered, with a sudden thrill, the wonderful paper she had discovered in the quilted flannel cloak. Was it gone?

She put her hand to her bosom in a tremor of fear. No, there it was safe and secure just where she had hidden it.

Ah, if Lord Strathspey knew, if he only knew what proof she held against him, her life would not be worth a penny in his hands.

She unfolded the time-worn paper and ran her eyes over its contents.

"I'll keep it," she murmured, under her breath, "I'll keep it no matter what happens. And if ever I am free again then, Lord Angus, I will have my revenge."

She stooped down and unlaced her dainty little boot with dextrous fingers, and removing it from her foot she proceeded to rip a little aperture and to insert the precious paper between the lining and the kid.

"I don't think that will be discovered," she remarked as she put on the boot again and relaced it.

She had scarcely done so when the key turned in the lock again, the door opened noiselessly, and the young lord of Strathspey Castle entered.

Maggie arose to her feet, the hot, indignant blood flooding her cheeks.

(To be continued.)

THE LILY OF CONNAUGHT.

CHAPTER XXII.

So full of artless jealousy is guilt

It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

Shakespeare.

RED RORY reluctantly followed the herald back to the castle. On every side as he proceeded he heard comments upon the coming trial and the mysterious flight or carrying off of the Princess Eva and her maid.

The majority of the people had adopted his theory, that the missing forester was one of the abductors, and it was with wonder that he heard Malise Mac Callum, the esquire of Lord Edward Bruce, spoken of as likely to be his associate.

Red Roderick was ignorant of the return of the Scottish chief, or that inquiries had developed the fact that his esquire had disappeared, but he seized eagerly upon this improvement to his own theory and asserted loudly that the mystery was out, that Bruce, who had shown such friendship to the prisoner, had abetted his esquire in the abduction of the princess.

Well was it for him that neither of the princes was present to hear him, or he might have paid dearly for the words which his over-impulsions caused him to utter.

As it was, many a clansman of the O'Connors handled the haft of his scian with an itching desire to bury its blade between his big ribs.

The great hall was already arranged as a court of justice. The chair of state upon the dais was draped with black.

Before and slightly below it were three others, for the Lord Brehon and his associate judges. These chairs were white.

The black hue of the royal seat was indicative of the executive position the king held in the court, and the snowy colour of the judges' chairs was emblematic of the purity of the justice they were to dispense.

Before these a long table extended across the hall, at which were seated the royal secretary, the judges' clerks, and several advocates in dark gowns.

Raised seats were placed at one side for the bishops and their suites, and near them others for the abbot and the royal chaplain.

On the opposite side of the hall were the clerks from the monastery in the coarse brown gaberdines of their order, and close by the learned men and poets, distinguished by their rich dresses of many colours.

Sergeants-at-arms and ushers, with white, silver-tipped staves, were ranged at either side of the chairs upon the dais and at the ends of the table at which the secretaries and advocates sat.

Before this table was a small square space, formed by four long spears stuck into the floor, point downward, with four shorter ones bound to them horizontally at about breast height.

This was the prisoner's dock.

The body of the hall was already filled by chieftains, knights and retainers, men and women, the latter mostly veiled, and the music loft was crowded with bright-robed harpers.

Yet so silent was it that the concourse might have been taken for statues instead of breathing beings.

The loud, tremulous stroke of the castle bell, more felt than heard, continued monotonously, and as the gray light of dawn struggled through the windows, becoming brighter and brighter until the lamps paled before it, the great burst of the wild reveille of drums and trumpets swelled along the plain, but the audience, patiently and silently eyeing the vacant chairs on the dais and the four upright spears, moved not.

At length the chamberlain appeared from the broad curtained door at the head of the hall, and, standing beside the throne, raised his staff and lowered it again.

This was the signal for the harpers, for the courts of justice as well as all other assemblies, were opened with music.

To a solemn march the king, preceded by bowing ushers, entered and took his seat.

Then came the bishops, supported by the abbot and the royal chaplain, and followed by their respective suites.

After them in stately dignity appeared the Lord Brehon, or chief judge, and two associates, preceded by two diminutive pages, bearing the scroll of the Brehon Code upon a crimson cushion.

All being seated the music ceased and a short pause ensued for the stilling of the court.

Then the secretary of the Lord Brehon arose and read the usual form of opening and the warrant of the king for the calling of this oddly timed session.

"Silence that bell!" said the king, in a very low voice, to one of his attendants, but the stillness was such that, low as his voice was, it was heard all over the hall.

The Lord Brehon now arose and spoke upon the cause of the assembly being called. He dwelt upon the dreadful sin of murder, and the heinousness of treason, especially when brought home to one so far advanced in the honourable paths of life as the accused. He further remarked that proof and conviction should precede condemnation. He spoke of the great responsibility of his high position and the beauty of justice, and ending with a prayer that prejudice might be banished from their midst, and that the grace of Heaven might guide them, He commanded the prisoner, Connacht Moran, to be brought into court.

At this command a buzz of expectation ran over the audience, and more than one deep sigh or suppressed sob was heard from the women's seats.

But all was as still as death again when, in a minute or two, the tread of many feet and the clank of chains were heard in the corridor.

Every eye was turned upon the door through which appeared first the castellan with his keys and drawn sword, then three axe-men marching abreast, then the prisoner between two officers, then three more axe-men, all followed by the provost and his bailiffs, closing up the rear.

A voiceless excitement pervaded the whole assembly as the little procession passed up the hall, and all strained forward to catch a glimpse of the young warrior whose name had so lately been synonymous with honour throughout the land.

His confinement in a subterranean dungeon had without doubt preyed upon him physically, for he was

thin and haggard looking; mental anxiety had also left its mark, but neither had been able to quell the falcon spirit or quench the fiery lustre of his eyes, and as he gazed around upon the great concourse whose many-coloured garments and ornaments blazed in the morning light his was not the dringing look of a felon but the glance of a warrior and a prince.

Many a fellow warrior's hand was raised silently in encouraging salutation to him, but he headed them not; only once, when a deep sob broke from one of the veiled women, did he turn with a quick start, fastening his lightning glance upon the spot, but the sound was not repeated, and, bowing his head as if in thanks for this tender sympathy, he moved on with a step prouder and firmer than that of his armed guard.

As he passed Red Roderick's seat his eyes fell upon the great red face of the warrior flushed even more than it wont by his early imbibitions, and he bowed an almost imperceptible bow, and a grateful smile crossed his pale features, but strange to say it was answered with a scowl.

On reaching the spear-enclosed dock the soldiers drew aside to allow him to advance. It was necessary for the prisoner to stoop and pass beneath the horizontal spear, and he passed before it, with the scarlet blood mounting in his pale face even to the roots of his hair, in one rush of shame, while his eyes sank to the chains upon his hands.

Brazil O'Connor sprang from his seat like a panther.

"Never, by Heaven, Moran. Never!" he cried, shattering the obstructing spear to splinters by one stroke of his weighty sword.

The prisoner turned a grateful look upon him; his eyes moistened, and he stepped into the allotted space erect.

One of the secretaries, acting as public accuser, arose and called the attention of the court and the prisoner while he read the "grave and grievous" charges laid against the prisoner.

The prisoner listened attentively, with a curling lip, to the tiresome reiterations, and in answer to the usual concluding question, said, in a clear, firm voice:

"Not guilty."

Then sounded the inevitable buzz of an audience settling down for a long sitting, and after the usual noisy demand for silence the witnesses for the crown were called.

It is not our purpose to drag our readers over what they already know by repeating it through the tedious lips of witnesses.

The fact of Conrad O'Connor's assassination—the suspicious circumstances of the quarrel of the deceased and the prisoner—the capture of the latter by the bloodhounds in close proximity to the scene of the murder—and the finding of his blood-covered dagger at the very spot—were repeated in all their circumstantiality.

The motive for the crime was shown by the accuser to be the desire of the prisoner to silence for ever the voice of the young prince who had impeached him of treason in the presence of the king and court—an impeachment the truth of which had been proved by late developments.

Then the learned man ran over all the corroborative circumstances.

He adduced the prisoner's well-laid plan for breaking prison and escaping which was so happily frustrated by the sagacity of a noble chieftain then in the court. He alluded to the forcible abduction of the princess and her attendant from a refuge where not only the sanctity of religion but that of the grave had been trampled upon by the emissaries of the prisoner. He dwelt in this connection upon the heinousness of a Christian knight entering into league with a sorceress, who had stricken a reverend man with blindness by power of her satanic arts, etc., etc.

"Prisoner," said the judge, when the accuser had resumed his seat, "hast thou any here to witness in thy behalf?"

"None, my lord. Fate and the circumstances are against me," answered the prisoner, in a clear, mournful voice.

"Whom hast thou here to plead for thee?" "No one. What need, my lord, of pleading? The art of rhetoric would be expended on the air with such a baseless argument. No pleading would avail me. I would not speak myself save only that I desire my oath should be recorded that I am guiltless as a child of these crimes, that my words of truth may after I am gone make some one think me other than a felon."

A murmur went over the congregation, and Brazil moved uneasily and impatiently in his seat.

"This is the case," resumed the prisoner, calmly, shaking back his long hair and turning his fine face lighted by the warm light of the morning around upon the audience, "upon the truth of which I stake my hope of Heaven."

He then rapidly and briefly related that Conrad had sought him in his chamber on the night of the banquet and lashed him into distraction by his upbraiding, that unknowing what he did he had sought the hall and caused the scene already described.

After his arrest and return to his room, for he was freed from arrest by the kindness of Desmond, he lay unhappy and restless until his ear was caught by the sweet-toned music, accompanied by a voice singing an invitation for him to visit the Fairy Well and seek to learn the future. In his feverish, fanciful state, and wishing for the cool night air, he seized his sword and hurried forth to obey.

After following the voice and the music along the edge of the water for some distance he noticed Conrad evidently also following the sound; he determined to return and avoid a meeting, and plunged into the woods for that purpose, but was astonished in the darkness by coming in violent contact with the very person he sought to avoid.

After the quarrel and separation he hastened self-exiled on his way through the woods, his heart burning with indescribable emotions, but among all was the determination, firmly fixed now, of visiting the Fairy Well. After much zig-zagging, wandering he reached the grove, and was approaching the mystic spring, when he heard the sound of drawing arms, and a figure bounded from the grove towards him with an impression.

He could not see, but he believed it to be Conrad, who had followed him thus far to renew the fight. He had pledged his word against it to Desmond, and sooner than encounter the boy again he sprang into the woods and fled. He heard a moment afterward a cry of angry disappointment behind him, and continued his way until weariness forced him to sit down and rest. Scarcely had he done so when wild screams of terror and calls for help in a woman's tones pealed through the wood from the direction of the well. Drawing his sword, he rushed back towards it, when suddenly he was attacked and torn down by two savage beasts whom he could not see in the gloom. He lost his sword in his fall, but drawing his dagger struck out right and left. Then he felt a crushing blow on the head, and knew no more until he opened his eyes on the body of Conrad beneath the torchlight of the well.

"This is the truth, my king, my lords and chieftains. I swear it is the truth. Of these accusations of treason and leaguings with sorcerers I know naught. I never planned to break prison; I had the means of freedom offered me by a kind friend—one whom I may not name—but I refused to fly and thereby seem guilty. Whoever says those treasonous misdeeds were for me, or avers that I had traitorous intercourse with Bermingham, is a black-hearted knave and speaks falsely. What man soever dares to put it forth that I, by word or action, have done ought to injure my fair mistress, Princess Eva, he is a crawling reptile. Now, my lords, I have done. I spoke not from the fear of death, for all here present know full well," he said, proudly raising his chained hands from the horizontal spear that formed the front of the dock, "that spears have been around me ere now, and these hands have been ever ready to grasp a shaft in other guise than this."

The women sobbed, and a loud murmur of applause arose from the men, but it was repressed by ushers and provost's assistants.

"In conclusion," he resumed, "if my poor name when I am dead may have the honour of being classed with that of the flower of Erin's beauty, I charge you, all that hear me, let it be in pure modesty. It is the charge of one that stands on the grave's brink and sees the death shadows. I will not mourn that prejudice against my love has brought me here. No, for her love is a bright crown to die for. And by my hopes of salvation I love her with a love that axe or halberd cannot kill. Yes, my lord, though you censure me I love her better than my soul. Now, my lord, your judgment."

As the judge slowly arose a piercing scream rang wildly through the hall, chilling every heart and causing the pulse of the prisoner to bound wildly.

One of the dark veiled women burst from the clasp of others endeavouring to hold her back, and dashing past the intervening seats she threw herself upon the prisoner's breast, sobbing frenziedly.

"Moran! Moran! Thine unto the block. Thine for ever!"

The dark mantle and hood that covered her fell off and the golden hair and angel face of Eva O'Connor appeared to the astonished assemblage.

"Daughter, daughter, you have crushed my heart," exclaimed the king.

But his voice was drowned in the mingled wailing of women and plaudits of men.

At this time, while disorder and confusion still reigned, Lord Edward Bruce strode up the hall toward the throne.

"Hold, king and judges," he said, with raised hand. "Suspend your sentence for a while. I take upon myself this warrior's defence."

A cry of surprised expectation burst from the audience, and the prisoner and the princess turned to gaze at the sternly handsome face of the speaker. Red Roderick sprang to his feet, and exclaimed, in a loud, angry tone:

"It cannot be! It is irregular that a dual, an alien, should plead before our judges, while our own scholars in law sit idle and agape."

"As I know something touching this affair which you learned men know not," said Bruce, calmly, "I crave from the king and my lord judge the privilege of speaking. I presume no lover of the truth will hinder me, and Sir Roderick is envious of my oratory. I do assure him he shall have good chance to answer every word I utter."

The great face of Red Roderick paled a trifle, then blushed red again, as redder than before.

"Speak, my lord," said the judge. "If you know anything that may benefit the prisoner speak. Far be it from us to crush the truth or close the stranger's mouth."

"Princess, would you of your good courtesy retire a space?" said Bruce, gently.

Eva bowed her head to him and left the prisoner's side with a tear-furrowed face.

She did not return to her seat, but dropping on a bench at the table in front of Moran she leaned her head on her hand and kept her eyes fastened on his face as if, for her, all other objects had vanished from the world.

As Red Roderick noticed this he ground his teeth savagely. His face was dreadfully distorted by jealousy. And Bruce, looking to the face of the king, saw that the gloom of anger hung upon his brow also like the stormcloud on a mountain cliff.

"I have no claim to be an orator," said Bruce, bowing to the judges and glancing toward the row of learned men and clerics, "and will not waste your time by the attempt to gloss my words. The facts of which I wot I shall spread out before you in simple guise. I see you wonder how the Princess Eva, supposed a Saxon prisoner, sits here. I will explain the mystery and prove to you that neither my esquire nor the forestar had hit or hand in this affair for which they have been blamed. Last night, riding hither in haste at the alarm of war, we were stopped upon the hill by a wild woman, seemingly a nun. In raving language she told of the ladies' carrying off and claimed my aid to save them. Upon the word, following her guidance, I and my escort hastened to the rescue. On our way we met the forestar, who had tracked the party thither with his dogs, but feared to venture on them single-handed lest he should fail and lose his game. He had left them resting in a forest cave and was hastening for help when he fell in with us. We proceeded slowly and quietly unto their lonely hiding-place. Led by the championing of their tethered horses we threw our forces around them and achieved the capture. Here is the forestar and these the men," he said, waving his hand.

And Black Murtaugh advanced with several wild-looking soldiers bound and under guard.

Red Roderick leaped to his feet, but sat down again at a motion from the Lord Brehen.

"Do these, my lords, resemble Saxons?" said Bruce; and a murmured negative ran over the hall.

"No. They are Irishmen; but, stubborn knaves true to their master, as they should be, they refuse to name him. But it matters not, we have other means to find him. Princess, can you point among the prisoners to either of those who bore you from the convent?"

The princess arose and pointed to one of them.

"The other is not there?"

"No. He was a man much larger than any of these."

"My lords," said Bruce, "my investigations have shown me that there were two objects in this outrage. The first to slink this knight, Sir Connacht Moran, deeper in the toils which should destroy him, the second to allow the planner of this villany to gain great name and royal gratitude by the recapture of the ladies. For this they halted in convenient place, for this they yielded easily, thinking me their master."

A sound passed among the prisoners like the growl of wild beasts, and was echoed in a surprised manner by Red Roderick; but a strange, defiant smile lit his eyes as they fell upon the determined faces of the prisoners.

"Now, my lords," continued Bruce, "I shall make plain to you the fiendish ingenuity with which the first object, the implication and destruction of this knight, was planned. His pennon was stolen from this hall and used as a decoy, his hunting-call was deftly imitated; this man, resembling him somewhat in the figure, was made to personate him; this massive, purporting to be written by or for him,

was sped upon this arrow-shaft into the princess's chamber."

As he spoke he produced and held up a slip of parchment and the broken arrow-shaft.

"Where were they obtained?" asked the judge.

"This slip was found at the mouth of the subterranean way, the arrow the princess bore away from the chamber as a weapon of defence. By this we trace the missing man, this fellow's companion in the outrage."

"How?"

"During the flight, just as they reached their horses, ere yet they had mounted, the princess heard her brother's bugle sounding in pursuit. Inspired by this she burst away and strove to fly. She was pursued, and rudely seized by the missing ruffian, the leader of the band, whose face she had not seen. Wild with fear she struck in self-defence and pierced his wrist with the arrow point. Then she was seized and borne away whilst the wounded man, unable to proceed, remained to stop the chase. Sir Roderick is that man. Behold his wounded arm. Let the Prince Desmond prove it."

A great cry of astonishment went up throughout the vast hall as Red Roderick sprang to his feet with a roar like a lion and flung aside the sash that supported his wounded arm.

"Ha, Sir Scot!" he cried, with flaming eyes. "So all your barking has been set at naught, forsooth; I am the bull you choose to bait. Der Connacht, sharpen thy wits, sir advocate. Dost thou not see this shaft is pointless? It could not wound a child. Body o' me, does not the prince know how I maimed my wrist by falling from the rocks? Did he not see the doctress nun pick the stone splinter from the wound and cast it in the wood?"

"Prevaricator!" roared Desmond, springing angrily forward. "How wast thou wounded riding down the rocks and thy steed tethered to a tree un hurt? Seest thou a point to put upon this shaft? Let the recluse approach."

Two soldiers advanced with a stately, black-robed form between them.

Roderick turned savagely to glare at it, but a veil covered the face impenetrably.

A great whisper of awe and curiosity ran over the audience as she passed.

"The recluse! Breda the sorceress!"

But the woman went on with her conductors, unheeding of the looks and murmurs, until the table stayed her passage beside the prisoner.

"Who is this woman?" asked the judge.

"She that was known as Sister Breda, the Recluse Nun," answered Desmond.

"Let her be unveiled," said the judge; and every soul, king, priest and scholar, leaned forward with expectation to see the face of this mysterious being.

One of the court officers approached her, but she haughtily waved him away and threw back her hood and veil with her own hands.

The blood was dried on her haggard face, and in the light of day the wound from which it had proceeded was visible.

"What knowest thou of this matter?" asked the judge. "Canst thou give information who broke the sanctuary of the convent?"

"That is the man," she said, pointing a finger of her long, slender hand to Roderick.

"How know you that?"

"I saw his countenance when he tried to kill me in the chapel vaults. Here is a tassel torn in my struggle from his collar cord. See if it be not waiting on his breast."

Red Roderick's face had paled when she uncovered, but now, as every eye was turned upon him, it flushed crimson, and he roared, in a voice of thunder:

"It is false—a plot they are brewing, this sorceress and this Scot. Let others who will list to these grandam's tales. I'll have none of them. Go plot it out among yourselves; for me, I have other hearts to hunt."

He turned to leave the hall, but Brazil waved his hand, and the axemen, previously instructed, threw themselves across his path with lowered weapons. With a yell of rage the giant stepped back and clapped his hand where his sword should be. It was gone!

Black Murtaugh, standing by his side, had at the instant of Brazil's motion severed the sword-belt by one dextrous stroke of his skean, and plucked away the weapon.

The ferocious anger of the mistrusted knight's utterance, and he stood with heaving chest and flaming eyes, like a chained tiger.

"Proceed," said the judge.

"This woman," said Prince Desmond, "was the guide that led me on their track; she was the doctress nun that dressed the wounds of this unworthy knight."

"Here is the 'splinter of stone' extracted from the

wound," said Breda, laying a small dark object on the table.

One of the secretaries picked it up and passed it to the judge.

"It is the steel tip of an Irish arrow, and fits this shaft exactly," said the judge, examining and fitting them together.

"It was left in the wound when the princess struck him; wrenching it from the casement had already made it loose."

"My lords, you should not listen to this fiend," cried Red Roderick, finding his voice. "She is a sorceress, a witch, a desecrator! Did she not strike Father Berthold blind? I tell ye, lords," he cried, pointing to the prisoner whom the princess had identified, "that man and I saw her with a finger-rough strike fire from out the chapel wall!"

The judge raised his hand and silenced him with a motion.

"Enough," he said. "From your own lips comes your conviction. You acknowledge sharing with this ruffian in his desperate and unholy deeds. You shall be held to answer for this wrong."

"I shall not answer!" exclaimed the chief, defiantly. "Hold me if you dare! I demand my freedom to depart. What care I for your concocted plots to shield a murderer and a traitor? Have him and welcome. I warn ye let me pass. Not all the power of the O'Connors can keep me here!"

The king seized his truncheon and sprang to his feet, as if he would have felled the contumacious prisoner to the earth.

"Ha! Can it not? Traitor, villain, thou shalt see!" he cried. "Hoi drag him to the dungeon—load him with gyves! By the sacred staff, thou shalt feel the might of the O'Connors!"

The soldiers were about to lay hands on the prisoner to drag him away when Desmond and Brazil simultaneously called upon them to desist, and Bruce, rising, addressed the king.

"My liege," he said, "I pray thee to restrain thy righteous anger while I bring to light the blackness of his villany, and make the virtuous knight's fair fame as clear as yonder sunlight."

A cry of joy burst from Eva O'Connor, and was echoed in a murmur of applause from the people as Moran turned to his warrior-advocate with a proud flush upon his handsome face and his eyes beaming with gratitude.

"First, sir secretary," continued Bruce, "I'll thank thee for those traitorous dispatches from Birmingham to Connacht Moran."

The packet was handed to him, and, selecting one of the dispatches, he placed the arrow-slip upon it. He examined them closely, and then passed them back to be submitted to the judge.

"You will note, my lord," he said, "that the verum of this document hath been pierced. The superscription and the opening words differ in character from the signature, and match exactly with the words upon that arrow-slip, the authorship of which hath been already traced."

"Tis true," said the judge, handing the document for the king's inspection.

"It is the villain's hand!" exclaimed the king. "Our anger heretofore did blind us."

"What!" cried Roderick, "will ye all take the word of this romancing Scot? Why did ye let your anger blind ye? Why did your anger hang the crafty spy that could have proven his treason?"

"Ho! there!" cried Bruce. "Bring the crafty forward."

And, to the wonder of the assembly, the shuffling, idiotic spy was dragged forward by the soldiers with a rope dangling from his neck.

"My Lord Desmond," said Bruce, "I took the freedom of our friendship to countermand thy orders, and snatch this carrion from the rope a while, for the furtherance of justice. He hath confessed where he obtained these packets."

"It is a hideous falsehood!" roared Roderick, endeavouring to spring at the shambling figure, but the soldiers held him back. "He dare not say that I did it!"

The spy laughed idiotically, and a significant smile passed over Roderick's face.

"Speak!" cried Bruce, with a stamp of his foot. "Who forged and gave thee these dispatches?"

The bent figure of the spy sprang erect at the words, and his hand was pointed untravellingly to the chieftain's face.

"That man—Red Roderick!" he cried, in clarion tones.

"Dog!" yelled the accused, bursting toward him, but he fell back again in wild amazement, for, with the rough rage thrown to one side, he saw before him, not the crooked frame and idiotic face of the traitor kerne, but the handsome features and flashing eyes of Bruce's esquire, Malise Mac Callum!

"Behold the missing equivo!" exclaimed Bruce, proudly, enjoying the surprise occasioned by this



[THE TRIAL.]

metamorphosis. "I set him on as spy upon this chief, who from the first I doubted, and right well he has played his part."

"Meehul? My trusty Meehul?" exclaimed Rory, involuntarily, in a questioning tone.

"The man whose trustiness you would have paid by letting him be hanged is safe—a prisoner. I overheard your plans. I captured him, and dressed in his disguise to thwart you," said Malise, answering the question. "Furthermore, my lords," said the young man, turning to the judges, "this Meehul, upon the night the prince was murdered, found the skiff upon the border of the lake where the ladies left it, and in it the key of the Princess Gate."

An exclamation from the princess and her brothers interrupted him, and they exchanged looks of surprise, while the face of the accused grew black and despairing.

"Upon this accident," continued Malise, "was built the scheme of enticing Sir Connacht Moran to commit himself by flight, and, failing that, to cause suspicion that he meant to fly."

"Hence," cried Brazil, angrily, "the tricky wager and the make-believe by which this recreant won my sword and mail. Here is the actor in the masquerade whom my Lord Bruce did capture from the moat."

"Enough!" said Rory, with a wave of his great hand. "Tis arrant witchcraft—satanic sorcery—a plot to injure me! But I demand that my own prince shall judge me in the midst of my own people, not here amongst bitter foes. Let me go. I will answer to these charges at the proper time and place. Ha, by my soul! one would think, to hear this turmoil, that, before this, bold stroke had ne'er been struck for handsome dame. Away—I have heard enough of it."

"Hold, my lords!" cried Bruce; "the full measure of his guilt has not been seen. We must yet find the murderer of the young Prince Conrad."

"Ha! Death and furies seize thee!" yelled the culprit. "Hast thou that? Cease thy catechizing, thou Pictish wizard. Man cannot fight against the powers of darkness. I did kill the prince, but 'twas unwittingly, and mostly his own fault. My blade was meant for other heart than his."

"For whose, thou traitor?" angrily cried the king.

"For his!" shouted Rory, pointing to Connacht Moran with hand that trembled from the intensity of his passion—"for his! that down-faced whippersnapper who had crossed my love and changed me to a demon!"

Not only the object of his hate but the whole court started with astonishment at the strength of rage

ringing in his thundering voice, and the really demonic expression of his wild face.

"I, too, as well as he," he cried, "followed the harping of this sorcerous jade—this hypocritical nun; and the stripling Conrad also was beguiled to rush upon his death—beguiled by her!"

"By her?" exclaimed the king.

"Ay, by her, the jingling Lady of the Glen—the prophetess against the royal house—the banshee that has haunted thee with frightful sights and sounds. They met and quarrelled and the princess parted them. Is it to wonder at that with her words of love and praise still ringing in my ears, causing my blood to boil, my brain to burn. I followed through the woods to slay my rival? I hastened to the well. I awaited his approach, I sprang toward him, he eluded me; I lost him for a moment, but in the next I met him, I thought, point to point. I broke his guard and smote him—he fell, and only when I heard his dying cry I knew it was the prince. Each thought the other Moran. I would have stayed by him, but that this witch's harping drove me off. I took to flight and hid amid the rocks, and soon the bloodhounds passed me sniffing on Moran's scent. They seized and dragged him back. Then the thought struck me to let him bear the blame and die the death."

Eva O'Connor had kept her wondering eyes fastened upon the savage face of the confessing culprit, emotion chasing emotion across her speaking features, until at last thought of the dreadful scene and the danger in which her beloved had stood overcame her, and with a loud cry she threw herself upon Moran's breast and swooned.

"Take me hence!" roared Red Rory, furiously. "I care not where, but hence. Let me not be maddened by such a sight as that. Away! Away!"

The Lord Brehon had been whispering to the king; he now turned with a severe face, and the silence of the grave reigned.

"Miserable, blood-stained man," he said, in a solemn voice, "prepare thyself to meet thy Maker. Thou goest hence to death."

"Ha, ha!" exclaimed the condemned, with a savage, defiant laugh. "You dare not, for your souls you dare not lift rope or axe against me. Hark, there already are the drums and bugles of my mountaineers."

Truly the music of his arriving clan swelled through the windows, but the king made one rapid, ominous movement of the sceptre, drawing it horizontally before his throat, and the spectators shuddered as the axemen and the provost-marshals closed around the prisoner and led him away, for they knew that his unwise words had hastened his doom, and

that before the clansmen's march would cease his head would deck the barbacan.

"Sir Connacht Moran, honourable knight and true," said the Lord Brehon, rising, "thou art freed from every imputation of crime or treason made against thee. Go, and Heaven be with thee!"

"Heaven be praised," said the young knight, looking proudly down upon the joyous face of the princess. "And next to thee my thanks, my Lord of Bruce."

He extended his hand to his able advocate, and Brazil and Malise were already breaking away the lances that formed the prisoner's dock when the stern voice of the king was heard.

"Hold!" he exclaimed. "This matter is not closed. Let the Princess Eva retire, this is no seemly place for O'Connor's Child."

Eva turned her eyes brimming with joyous tears towards her father, but shrunk with a cry from his stern face and the angry gaze of Desmond, who now bent upon the arm of the throne with his lips close to the king's ear. Her heart sank, for she knew that their looks boded no good to Moran. She stepped to one side and was joined by Theresa.

"Sir Connacht Moran," said the king, in stern, icy tones, "though our joy is great at thy relief from these foul suspicions, so lately cast upon thee, yet 'tis our desire that thou depart our realm, to abide beyond its limits until such time as we may set for thy return."

A cry of astonishment passed through all the hall, so unexpected was this second blow.

The princess threw herself upon her knees with clasped hands, crying:

"Oh, mercy, father, mercy, king!"

"Up and away. Hence, girl! thou dost bemean thyself!" cried the king, angrily.

"But, my liege," exclaimed Moran, in a surprised tone, "why is this? In what unknown manner have I caused this blight? What reason—"

"The reason of my will!" thundered the king. "It is my will, and who shall dare gainsay it? Take this day and night for thy preparation, but see thou dost not let to-morrow's light shine on thee in our confines, or, by my soul, thy head shall fall. Go!"

He waved his sceptre, and the young knight, with heavy heart turned, and, kissing the cold hands of the stricken princess, slowly left the hall amidst tearful eyes and murmured words of pity and blessing.

The princess too retired helped by Theresa, but still the court sat.

The soldiers of Red Roderick, who were prisoners, had been removed, but still there stood before the judges, one dark figure between two axe-men.

(To be continued.)



[THE RIGHT MAN.]

ELGIVA;

OR,
THE GIPSY'S CURSE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Snapt Link," "Evelyn's Plot," "Sybil's Inheritance," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The dead cannot grieve:

Not a sob—not a sigh meets my ear

Which compassion itself could relieve.

Ah, sweetly they slumber, nor hope, love, nor

fear:

Peace, peace is the watchword, the only one here.

LENA's heart beat throbbingly—fiercely, it might well might be called—as she pursued her dark and gloomy search.

It was indeed an appalling spectacle for one of the bravest and strongest of the more courageous sex to gaze into the vista of cavern-like passages, with their arched roofs, their damp floors, their irregular walls, to which the flickering light gave a yet more dismal and terrifying appearance.

One might have imagined there were phantoms figuring forth in the broken recesses from space to space, or, as those fearful and repeated groans might indicate, yet more alarming human agencies at work in that subterranean world.

That man's power had aided nature's fancies was soon evident by the appearance of regular though roughly hewn steps in the turn of the winding passages through which the girl was taking her slow and gloomy path.

Cautiously and gently she unrolled her ball, upon which her safety solely depended.

Should that break, should she lose its clue, or should any unlooked-for damp extinguish her light, then—but Lena dared not contemplate the fearful result of such a catastrophe; madness lay that way; and she rather strove to turn her thoughts to the sole inspiring influence that could nerve her noble heart for the task she had undertaken.

Life might be at stake, as those deep, heartrending tones betokened—and whose life?

Ah! there was a feverish agony in that thought that warmed the chill blood and strengthened the trembling steps to as great a speed as was consistent with the safety of the brave explorer.

She kept on her way, guided by the increasing distinctness of the sounds that came with fearful, clock-like regularity on the air.

It was like a death knell, and the walls re-echoed it with solemn, burning distinctness.

At length they came so near and clear on the ear

that Lena began to pause in her course, lest by one wrong turn that would carry her beyond their source she should fail to discover whence they proceeded.

Twice she had descended steps; now she stood at a spot from which two of the strange winding paths seemed to diverge.

Which would conduct her to the sufferer?

That was the question that strained her every sense to determine.

Once—twice—thrice came that awful sound; and, after a moment's pause, she decided on her course, and went tremblingly but unhesitatingly on.

It was a narrower, deeper, damper path than she had yet found, and her steps were slow and difficult over its rugged surface, while her lamp had to be held cautiously before her to prevent her from stumbling with fatal mistake on the ground.

It was perhaps a hundred yards that she had gone when she suddenly stopped, and a slight shriek escaped her lips.

And no wonder, for before her, and nearly in her path, was a yawning chasm, and from that chasm the groans perceptibly came slowly, painfully forth.

Lena's heart stopped beating as she paused to listen. They were faint but audible sounds, that sent a thrill of sharp agony through her very brain.

"Mercy, mercy! Oh, fiends, fiends! is there no human pity in your natures? Oh, Heaven, is there no help—none, none?"

Then the groans recommenced as if the strength for speech was failing from exhaustion and despair.

Lena's very tongue had seemed to cleave to her mouth as she listened to that familiar, beloved voice.

Yes, it was his—Juan's. Her beloved brother-cousin, her noble, injured, precious Juan, lay there, in that despairing, hopeless misery.

"Yes, yes, yes!" she shrieked, bending as far as she dared over the abyss. "Juan, Juan, it is I—Lena. I am here. I will save you. Only speak, speak. Say you hear—you know me, and I will never desert you, never."

A low murmur again came on her ear:

"Ah, ah, it is so. Yes, I am mad. That was like Lena's voice—but no, no, no; I am losing my senses. I shall die soon, then all will be over."

"No, Juan, no; it is no delusion. It is I—it is Lena, your companion, your sister. Do not despair. Try to calm yourself; try to listen. You are safe now. I will never leave you again. See!"

And as she spoke she flashed the light over the cavern mouth to prove that she was indeed there and that it was no delusion.

"Can it be?" he murmured. "But no, no; I am dreaming—mad—and I am faint, faint."

A happy idea struck poor Lena as she listened. She would try to lower to him some of the restoratives she had by an inspiration brought, and thus both prove her real presence there and perhaps strengthen him for the necessary effort he must make.

She tied a piece of thick string to the small flask of brandy she had brought and some of the soft biscuit that formed their sole bread in their strange home, and then once again called, distinctly and slowly, and as loudly as her soft voice would permit:

"Juan, Juan! I am going to put down food and refreshing drink. Try to take it, and it may give you strength, and then you can tell me what you can do. Only be brave and all will be well. I will die rather than desert you, dear Juan! For my sake—for Elgiva, try and struggle with despair."

He seemed to listen, for the sounds ceased till she had finished.

Then the words:

"Thanks; bless—bless," came on her ears, as if some softening tears were relieving the brain.

And then by slow, cautious degrees, and flashing her light over the cavern, she contrived to lower the stimulant that was the sole chance of life for one so dear and so suffering.

She was successful—almost beyond her hopes. She could hear an almost child-like cry of delight, and then the faint gurgling as of one who strove to swallow, though with pain and difficulty, struggling with weakness and darkness, and it might be hampered by bonds.

"Juan, dearest, are you listening? do you believe me now?" she said, in accents that might well have pierced the heart of a statue.

"Yes, yes," he answered, "I know now; it is you, my noble, generous Lena. But it is too late—too late!"

"No, no!" she exclaimed, eagerly. "It is never too late while life lasts. Juan, dearest, listen. I am near you, in the same cavern that is your living tomb, and I will save you if you will but be brave and give me time to think and act. Can you command your feelings, Juan? Can you wait while I concert my plans for your deliverance? All must depend on that. Surely you can trust me, Juan, my brother?"

"Yes, yes," he murmured, in tones that, although stronger and more distinct, were yet trembling and faint. "I can, I can, but it is dreadful, Lena, this living grave. And I am almost mad."

"Hush," she said, firmly, "you must not even think of such horrors, Juan. I swear to you, if you will, that I will never take rest till I have rescued you. But, alas, alas! I cannot yet see the means of raising you from that terrible bed."

"I know, I know," he responded. "It cannot be! Leave me, Lena, leave me to die."

"Juan, this is cowardly—selfish," said Lena, reproachfully. "You have no right to torture us who love you by such weakness. I adjure you, in Elgiva's name, to help one who would die, who has already risked and suffered much to save you. Juan, you shall—you must be saved. Do you listen? Will you comply with my prayer?"

There was a sound as of a distant sob.

Then Juan's voice came again, sad, but with a tinge of reviving courage in its tones.

"Bless you, Lena, bless you; I will. I will try, but I am well nigh spent."

"Yes, yes, I know, my poor, darling, injured brother," she said, eagerly; "but it proves Heaven's will to save you that I am here. Listen, dearest. I must not be rash; I must take time to arrange my plans, or your enemies may discover you once more. But if there is strength in woman's love and in woman's will you are safe now that I have discovered your prison. Can you not trust me?"

"Yes, yes," he said, "but it will be dark and desolate again, Lena, when you are gone."

"Then you shall have light; I will return with another lamp," she said, soothingly. "And pray for strength and help, my brother, and bless Heaven that you are no longer alone and unfriended, but that I am known of your prison and will deliver you from it. There, I shall not be absent long; at least you shall have light in your darkness."

And she turned as she spoke to retrace her way through the gloomy, winding passages that led to that living tomb.

Swiftly, hopefully, and with the energy of love, she flew rather than walked through the dark maze.

She paused only to register in her mind each turn and feature of the path, through which the friendly silk was a sure and sufficient guide; and when at length the warm and luxurious region in which her own and Tessa's abode was fixed presented itself she could scarcely have credited the brief space that really divided the two opposing spots.

Tessa was still sleeping, and the small timepiece that alone seemed to connect her with the calendar of the outer world told her that a brief hour had been the whole space of time occupied in the search.

She quickly trimmed and prepared another lamp for Juan's use, and replenished her slender store of provisions for him.

Then, gliding back with a yet swifter pace, she arrived at the hideous bedchamber in a shorter time even than the previous transit had occupied.

A faint cry of joy greeted her advent.

"Dear, dear Lena, I can indeed trust you now," moaned the sufferer. "But it was like a dream, and I dared hardly even think that the bright vision could be true."

"Hush, hush, dear; do not speak of myself or others, but let us consider the present," returned the girl, soothingly. "Listen, dear Juan: You must not feel impatient or despairing during the interval before my next return. I shall need to arrange plans, and to procure instruments ere I begin the task of your deliverance. But I will come again to visit you if it be long delayed. Only it must be carefully, most carefully prepared."

"Yes, yes. Now you have returned I can believe you," said the invalid prisoner. "Till then it seemed like a dream that I dared not believe. But this is real. I can trust it now."

And he gazed at the light as fondly as if it had been a very messenger of safety and bliss.

"It is well then," she said, in her soft tones, "and, please Heaven, a short time will suffice for my arrangements, and then you shall be drawn from this living, terrible tomb."

"Bless you, bless you," he said. "Lena, if ever I should return to light and freedom and rank you shall never leave me more. You shall ever be my own dear, dear sister. But oh," he cried, "it is so dreadful, alone—alone with the dead, and—spirits, Lena—spirits."

"No, no. Heaven watches over you. You cannot be afraid when it brought me here," she remonstrated. "Juan, take courage, my dearest brother; your end is not yet. You shall not die, for your enemies to triumph over you. You are safe, safe, my dear, persecuted brother, if my very life can avail to save you from such a fate. Is not this sufficient?"

"Noble girl," he murmured. "Yes, I will strive to be worthy of you; I will be brave. Only it will not be long—very long—will it?" he added, in a beseeching tone.

"Twelve hours shall not elapse ere I will see you again," she said. "And if my plans be not complete I will at least tell you of my hopes, my efforts. Dear, dear Juan, farewell, but only for a brief space."

The girl hurried back to her own resting-place with the vague fear that she might have been missed during her absence.

That fear was strengthened by the sound of firm, masculine steps parading the floor as she approached its confines.

Her spirit died within her for Juan's sake, not her own, as she lifted the veil, expecting to encounter the dark, frowning aspect of Harold Farino. But, to her inexpressible relief and surprise, she perceived the well-known and familiar form of her old friend Bertie bending over the heavy basket that he had just deposited on the floor.

CHAPTER XXXV.

My sweet one, my sweet one, thy life's bright joys

are fled.

And for the hopes, the sun-bright hopes that blossomed

at thy birth,

They too have fled, to prove how frail are cherished

things of earth.

"AMICE, surely my probation is over at last," said Lord Easton, some two days after the strange disappearance of the Earl of Chetwode. "You and your guardian declared that this wedding would be the sole evil that was to be feared. Now for my answer: Will you be my bride, my beloved, cherished wife? Surely it is no very difficult question to answer after this long suspense?"

Amice did for once betray the agitation and the beaming doubtfulness of a betrothed or expectant bride.

She looked narrowly round, her lips moved, but no sound issued, and then the pretty teeth once more closed without audible words being heard.

"I have promised," at length she said. "You must ask her—the duchess or Mariana—they know all. There is a secret they say, but I am as ignorant of it as yourself, my lord."

"But that need not affect your answer," said the nobleman, anxiously. "I am content, Amice, whatever be the truth as to you and your history. You are lovely, young, graceful. I love you. What need there more? I am my own master, I need ask no consent, no approval."

"But you may need one, my lord, from those who have the guardianship of this fair girl," said the Duchess of San Alva, who had entered unnoted during the marquise's earnest words. "You appear to think that the secret must be a base and disgraceful one. Suppose it were to turn out that the unknown Mdile, De Castro, a name that I never pretended to assign as a true and genuine one—suppose, I say, that this fair comet turned out to be a fixed star? In other words, how know you that she is not as high in rank and as richly dowered as a peer or even a prince?"

Amice started, but a warning gesture from the lady closed her lips, and Lord Easton was the first to speak.

"In any case, duchess, it seems to me that I may claim my reply," he said, coldly. "If I am willing to give any poor advantages that I may possess to Mdile, De Castro, I may also venture to presume that I am not altogether worthy of her hand even should she prove to be what you imply, one born in the same sphere with myself."

"True, but the betrothal might be made in a somewhat different fashion, and with other premises, my good lord," replied the lady, with answering coolness.

"However, we need not bandy words on the occasion. The time is very near at hand for me to own the truth. And even now, if I can secure the proofs and the presence of those who are most nearly concerned, there need be no farther delay in advancing Mdile, De Castro's pretensions. If I understand aright, my lord," she continued, anxiously, "your first idea was to court the Lady Elgiva, heiress of Arnhem and Chetwode, was it not?"

"I am ready to acknowledge that I had some such match recommended and urged on me," returned the marquise, in some surprise, "but I was soon diverted from such an idea by the meeting with Amice. From that hour my allegiance has never wavered."

"You had no suspicions that any other claimant might appear for such title and estates?" resumed the duchess.

"Not the slightest. How could it be possible?"

"Perhaps then it would be no unfitting reward were you after all to marry this heiress whom you so disinterestedly renounced," observed the lady, looking sharply at him.

"Never," he said, firmly, "never. You do me gross injustice by even imagining such treason possible, duchess. Where she ten times as rich and wealthy and high born she could never win my heart, never be my bride."

The duchess smiled most provokingly as she put her hand upon Amice's arm and impelled her gently from the spot where they were standing.

"Swear not at all, my lord, lest you should be forsworn," she said, calmly. "And that you may appreciate the full value of my words I will ask your presence in the interview that is about to take place between Count Arnhem and his daughter and

myself. Amice, my love, you need not look so reproachful. It is nearly time that all your doubts should be cleared up, and that the bondage that has been imposed on you should be removed. Come."

She walked from the apartment as she spoke, followed by Lord Easton in wondering surprise, and directed her steps to the library where the count spent most of his time since the grievous blow that had fallen on him and his child. He was sitting there now as they entered, in his usual position, his head leaning on his hand, his brow contracted, his lips working as if speaking to himself some unpronounced and inaudible words—his whole aspect that of a stricken and prostrate man.

He looked up as they entered with a kind of vacant air.

"You wished to see me, duchess. May I ask you to be brief?" he said. "My brain is scarcely equal to the comprehension of long communications, and my daughter needs still more indulgence from her friends. But I understand that you desired her presence in the interview you requested."

"I did, count, and I have already sent for her to join in our party," said the duchess, with provoking calmness. "If I mistake not I hear her approaching," she added as the door opened and Elgiva slowly entered the room, dressed in the deep mourning she had assumed since her lover's disappearance.

Her face was as white as the plain muslin collar round her snowy throat, and her large eyes had a mournful expression as if tears would be their natural tenants for many a long day to come.

But never perhaps had she looked more touchingly lovely, and the more brilliant charms of her rival seemed garish and earthly in contrast with her spirituelle, pure loveliness that was rather like an angel's than a mortal woman's.

"You summoned me, papa," she said, calmly, with a slight bow to the strangers, whom to her surprise she found there. "May I ask for what purpose?"

"Nay, my child, I had no command for you," the count replied, tenderly. "And I would not have exposed you to this rencontre with strangers had I been able to prevent an unwelcome intrusion," he added, haughtily, glaring at Lord Easton and the duchess.

Elgiva was perhaps too completely prostrate in spirit to betray resentment, and fate seemed to have exhausted her arrows of sorrow that it was hardly possible she could feel further misery.

Yet there was something galling and distressing in the whole scene, which awakened a bitterness of feeling foreign to the gentle nature of that stricken one.

"We are bound to extend courtesy to our guests, and even in this home of grief we must not fail in it," she said, coldly. "But it will be at least a kindness on their part to make the errand, whatever it may be, a brief one."

And she looked at the duchess, who stood somewhat before Lord Easton and Amice, as she spoke.

"You shall be obeyed, for perhaps the last time in this mansion whose control you find so irksome," returned the lady, calmly. "And I had the precautions to make all ready ere I began the proceedings which you think so cruel, fair young lady. But we may at least venture to avail ourselves of the chairs which are around us," she added, with a sarcastic smile, placing herself in one of the luxurious reclining and reading lounges that were in profusion about the apartment.

But Elgiva remained standing by her father, her arm round his neck, her sweet face white and sad, but calm and loving, as if she would shelter him and herself within the shade of her natural love, which alone remained for their consolation.

"Now may I request your explanation?" said the count, trying to gather courage for that revelation whose nature he instinctively felt must be painful and mortifying, though not perhaps so much as that one fearful secret which had so long lain at the very bottom of his heart and cankered a nature that was otherwise kindly and loving, though weak and ambitious in its aspirations.

"I told you but now," began the duchess, slowly and impressively, "that this may be the last time you would be obeyed in this ancient castle, Lady Elgiva. Can you guess my meaning?"

"So long as the death of the Earl of Chetwode is blessed uncertainty," returned the girl, proudly, "I am thankful to renounce my right as its heir. Please Heaven, I may never be entitled to so miserable a pre-eminence."

"You need not be disturbed on the occasion, since the pre-eminence is not yours, nor ever was in right of birth or descent," said the duchess, calmly. "You are no more heiress of Arnhem and Chetwode than I am, or the meanest manial in your service. Lady Elgiva of Arnhem is in truth the gipsy-born child of Harold Farino and his deceased wife Sybil, while Amice, hitherto believed to be the daughter of that gipsy marriage and obscure descendant of that

wandering tribe, is the true heiress of the ancient line in default of its dead heir. And now, Count of Arnheim, are you prepared to receive a child even more beautiful, and, thanks to my care, equally accomplished and refined as she who has so long usurped an illegal right?"

Elgiva's clasp had half-involuntarily tightened round her father's neck as the lady spoke.

The count eagerly placed his arm round her slender form as if in utter disbelief of the incredible tale.

"Lady, you are mad!" he said, bitterly, "or else you suppose I must be so, to assert such a wild and improbable story. My darling is mine, my very own. The countess bore a daughter in the presence of more than the usual number of witnesses, for by a strange prearrangement I determined that there should be no doubt or discussion as to one who might by some after chance become heir of the broad lands and ancient title of its forefathers. From that time I have never even for a day been separated from my child. No, whatever may have been the chances and the misadventures of my house, at least this one cannot be laid to its charge. It is a foul slander, my Elgiva, and you need not have even one heart pang as to its result."

The old man pressed his daughter to his bosom in eager and half-frenzied fondness, such as he had rarely displayed in other and happier days.

But the girl herself looked more questioningly and doubtfully on her father, as they might indeed be fairly termed, and she said, calmly, "It is, as my father says, too extraordinary for belief, but be assured that I shall not attempt to contend for what is now so worthless a possession, if you are able to convince me that it is wrongly mine. But no, it is incredible," she said, with a slight gesture of ineffable scorn. "Had it been true, why was it so long concealed? No, I should not do injustice to others by attaching the slightest credence to so wild a tale."

The duchess smiled scornfully, while Amice's eyes were literally strained in irrepressible eagerness. "Pardon me, Lady Elgiva, as I will at present term you, I am equally proud, and true as you can claim to be, and I pledge my very truth and honour and ancient name on the fact I now assert. As to the reason for its long concealment, and the share I now take in its revelation, that must for the present remain a mystery, since the time has not yet come for a full explanation of the truth, but that it is a real and genuine statement shall very quickly be ascertained," she added, with an air that carried conviction with it.

"Lord Easton," she continued, "may I ask you to sing that ball?"

Scarcely had the silver tones of the bell ceased to vibrate on the ear when Marian Oliver and a woman of yet more elderly and infirm appearance entered the library, the former with a packet of papers in her hand that seemed to be yellow with age, and tied carefully with a new strip of coloured ribbon.

Marian was pale, unusually pale, and her lips were compressed as by a rigid effort to maintain her composure, but her step was firm and her bearing calm and unmoved.

"I am here at your bidding, Duchess of San Alva," she said. "Have you informed these noble dupes of the error of which they have been the victims?"

"Yes, but they appear extremely incredulous, my good Marian," returned the duchess, with a bitter smile; "neither the count nor the fair usurper is willing to acknowledge the mistake that has occurred."

"Then it will make proof more necessary," was the reply. "Yes, a painful, but stern necessity, Count Arnheim, you at least should not be slow to acknowledge the possibility of such occurrences," she added, meaningly. "It can be no secret to you that such events have occurred in the history of your line. Your child was changed at nurse. That is the sole explanation. The gipsies who were employed to abstract the hair of your ancient line and vast wealth were as sharp on their own account as you could be on theirs. It occurred to them that it would be a fitting end to the play if a child of their race were to reap the benefit of the deed. That is the sole mystery. Elgiva Farino is our kith and kin, and the Lady Amice of Arnheim and Chetwode will at last assume her proper style and honour. Will you not give a tardy blessing to your child?" she added, leading forward the cold and reluctant girl to the old man's chair.

But the count drew back.

"No," he said, "no, not yet, if at all. It will be a sore difficulty to convince me that this beloved child is not my own dear and worthy daughter, and I will not desert her in her hour of sorrow and need. Marian Oliver, you who have received my bounty, eaten of my bread and drunk of my cup for so many years in trust and confidence, it is impossible that you should so cruelly have betrayed my trust," he added,

in a piteous, pleading voice. "This must be a hideous falsehood—I cannot, will not listen to it—no, not for an instant!"

His arms tightened round his beloved and suffering child with touching eagerness.

But Elgiva gently and determinately freed herself from his hold.

"Father," she said, gently, "for I must still call you by that dear name, this is not right, not brave, nor noble. If it be the truth, it is but just that it be proved and attested; if not, it will fall to the ground in contempt and uselessness. Let them speak; let them bring forward the evidence of their strange tale."

"That is soon done, young woman," said the duchess, sharply. "Marian, will you open that packet, or shall I?"

The woman only replied by cutting the strings and then breaking the seal of the yellow envelope she held, and drawing from it some papers and a small miniature.

"Now," she said, "Count Arnheim, here is a description of your deceased lady's infant, written by the doctor who brought her into the world, and who at the special request of the countess drew it up for your own use, since you were absent from home at the time of her birth. You will recognize his name and signature. Next, here is the signed acknowledgment of the father of Elgiva, commonly known as the heiress of Chetwode and Arnheim, of her delivery into my keeping in exchange for the babe born of the Countess of Arnheim. And, lastly, here is a small picture of your rightful child at three months old, which you will see had a very different aspect to your supposed daughter. Then this woman, the nurse who attended on your lady, will confirm the statement, and prove that the infant she nursed had all the peculiarities which can be traced in the Lady Amice and are utterly absent in Elgiva Farino. Mrs. Davis, it is for you to say what is your remembrance of the babe, and then it can be judged whether it is the same with that in this document, which I solemnly swear has never met your eyes since the day when it was written and consigned to my care."

Mrs. Davis looked decidedly uncomfortable during the delivery of the harangue, but she quickly overcame the feeling and began in the usual old wife's style:

"Well, Mrs. Oliver, it is no great thing for me to bring to mind, since the countess was about the sweetest lady I ever nursed, and surely a prettier babe could not see light. Well, then, it was just this same beautiful dark eyes and hair, that is for all the world like that which she had on her pretty head, but only lighter as to the natural for a babe. But I'm very sure that it was no more such black eyes as this young woman's," she added, hesitatingly, "than they were green. And that's just what I have to say, except that there was a heart-shaped mole just beneath the hair on the right ear, and also one of just the same shape on the top of the left arm. And if these marks are not there why then it is not the child of the Countess of Arnheim, that's certain."

The old lady gave a half-indignant grunt as she concluded.

"Amice, my love, come here, and you will soon let us see whether you have these said marks," said the duchess, at the same moment turning up the loose sleeve that Amice wore and displaying the very identical mark spoken of by the nurse.

Then the duchess, lifting up the rich mass of brown, glittering hair, showed a similar mark on the white skin immediately beneath.

"But this is no proof; there may be collusion; this woman may have had opportunities of seeing this young girl and knowing her peculiarities," cried the count, sternly. "I am not going to part with my own darling, my blessed child, on such bare evidence as this. Elgiva, my own precious one, do not weep. I will never, never desert you, my only comfort—the sole object of my miserable life."

"You are very flattering to your own lawful daughter, my good count," said the duchess, coolly. "However, to show your mistake in this matter I need only request you to look at this packet that Marian Oliver has retained for so many years in her possession. The seal, the writing, the very colour of the paper might well satisfy you as to its genuineness. Marian, give me the packet," she added. "Nay, you need not doubt the honour of a noble like Count Arnheim—more especially," she observed, with a slight sneer, "in the presence of witnesses like ourselves."

The packet was handed to the count with a half-taunting formality by the lady, and then the unfortunate man was immediately forced to give way before the pressure of circumstances and proof.

There, without controversy, was that terrible and undoubted description, corroborating the account given by the nurse, and also signed with the peculiar, cramped hand that he remembered so well.

No, he dared not doubt, and yet he could not realize so fearful and crushing a blow.

"My own darling, my Elgiva! oh, forgive, forgive; my punishment may be greater than I can bear," he said, with a groan. "But yet there is one thing more to explain ere all is over. Woman, when and how was this miserable crime committed, and how dare you betray so sacred a trust? I must know all—ere I will be content to give up the last grains of hope and peace."

"Well, I told you before that all cannot be explained yet," returned Marian, calmly. "There were reasons, perhaps, why the young heir of Chetwode was abstracted that are not yet patent to the world, or even to those who are more nearly associated with the crime. And all that I can say now is that the consequent exchange of children was a natural result of the opportunity thus given for the aggrandisement of one of the tribe. But more than that I neither may nor will tell. It is enough that the exchange was easy enough when once a mother's eyes were closed for ever. No one else would so quickly have discovered the change—from black eyes to brown—when the age and general appearance of an infant were the same. Count of Arnheim, I swear to you by all that is most sacred that what I have told you is the pure and simple truth, and I entreat you for your own sake as well as others not to push matters to an extremity by demanding further evidence. If you would doubt me here in my hand in proof of what I say."

And she held out her hand to the nobleman, who, with a strange, scared look, placed his own thin fingers in her palm.

It was a singular proceeding for the high-born and proud noble, and a yet more extraordinary result seemed to follow the momentary clasp. His face faded to an ashen hue, his eyes were opened to their fullest extent with a wild and questioning glance, and his lips literally quivered till his very teeth chattered in the effort to restrain his agitation.

"Elgiva—poor, poor child," he faltered, at length, "what can I do? What will become of you? Oh, mercy, mercy! If I have sinned, great and heavy is my punishment," he groaned, almost inaudibly.

The girl paused for a few minutes as if to collect her energies for endurance.

"Father," she began, "but, no—no, that I must never say more." She went on with an impatient shudder: "I mean, my lord, I need not ask if it is true. I see it without such appeal. And I will not give you one pang by complaint—but, if I may be sheltered till all is over, till the poor lost one is discovered or his death proved, I ask no more."

"Oh, it will need little inquiry on your part," said Marian, with perhaps more bitterness than was in her heart. "There is no doubt as to his fate, you may be assured, and, what is more, if he were to be discovered it could make little difference to the gipsy girl that the Earl of Chetwode was once again in his rightful place. I presume you do not think he would be guilty of such a madness," she continued, scornfully. "No; your place is henceforth with your own people, where you will find forgetfulness of one so far above you in rank and station. Better perhaps as it is that he should have been spared the humiliating discovery that he had nearly wedded a low-born, obscure gipsy girl!"

"But the gipsy girl will not rest till his fate is known," said the girl, firmly. "Marian, at least you have been merciful in the time you have chosen for this revelation. Juan's death makes all other trials as nothing, and all will be lost in the joy of his safety if he be again found. Yes," she added, turning to her rival with a calmness more mortifying than reproaches or tears or resistance, "I yield you up that which is worthless to me now, unless as a means of finding him—my beloved, my betrothed; and if you have one spark of woman's love and nature in you it can never bring you happiness while he whom you once loved so wildly is in mystery and danger."

"Whom you loved!" exclaimed Lord Easton, who had remained in breathless contemplation of the scene. "Amice, what means this? Surely you—never could have—"

"No—no—no. She raves in her bitterness," cried the girl, impatiently. "Duchess, Marian—will you see me thus insulted without one attempt to stop her? My lord, you seem very loth to receive me as your daughter," she went on, turning to the count, with the lofty grace she could assume at pleasure. "Am I to find that after these long years of misery and suffering I am to be rewarded by such cold scorn from my only parent?"

Count Arnheim extended his hand.

"No, no, not so; but my love is hers," he said, sadly. "She has been my child too long, her every look and word is dear to me. I cannot take a stranger to my heart in her place. You will be heiress of Arnheim, that must be enough for your happiness."

"Not quite, I trust," interposed the marquise. "Not quite, count. I will soon relieve you from the odious charge," he said, indignantly, "of a young and lovely daughter, if you will give her to my care and love and tenderness. Amice," he went on, taking her hand, "I loved and chose you as a poor and nameless girl, you cannot doubt my love if I plead for the hand of the heiress. Will you answer me now, in your ungracious father's presence? Will you be mine—my cherished, worshipped bride?"

Amice gave a triumphant glance at the white and miserable countenance of the count, and Elgiva's sad, shrinking figure, as Marian seized her reluctant hand.

"Yes," she said, at length. "Elgiva will at least be thus removed for ever from my path when I am under your care, Lord Easton, and my father forced to treat me with the honour and consideration that he appears to refuse to me for her sake. Lord Easton, if it rests with me to give you the answer you crave, you need not fear—I am willing to trust you with my future life."

(To be continued.)

GLIMPSES OF SOCIETY.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"You went to see Peter Bellamy, didn't you, ma'am, about a little gal—little curly-headed Nell?"

It was Ragged Dick who asked this question, standing in the presence of Stella Hayden, whither he had been admitted after a long delay on the representation that he had something of great importance to tell her.

"Who are you, and why do you ask the question?" she replied, eyeing his rag-covered form and ferret-like face suspiciously. "Did he send you here?"

"Not he. When there's money to make he wants to do it himself. He'll get a kid like me to do the work, and he'll take the pay. That's his game, and I don't like it. I've got down on him, and I'll work my own hand after this."

"Well, what do you come to me for?"

"To see what you'll give to know where to put hands on little curly-head."

"You say no one sent you?"

"Nobody. I come 'cause I wanted to."

"You know where the little girl is?"

"In course I do."

"I will give you twenty pounds to show her to me."

"Won't do! I can make more from Barnaby Bulge."

The boy started to leave.

"Stop," she said, quickly. "I will give you more if I know you are telling me the truth."

"Madam, the Count Volchini wishes to see you immediately on a matter of importance, he says."

It was a servant entering who thus broke in upon the conversation which Dick was holding with Stella Hayden.

"Go in there, quickly, and stay till I call you out—quick, so that you are not seen here."

The lady pointed to a chamber joining her room, and, almost pushing the boy in, turned the key and then put it in her pocket.

"I will see him," said she to the servant, whom she knew to be discreetly silent on all occasions without he was told to speak.

The next instant Count Volchini made his appearance.

He did not as usual waste time in idle compliments. He had none to spare, nor had he inclination either just then. His mind was too full of his anticipated conquest.

"My dear Madame Stella," said he, "I want you to write a polite note to the lovely Georgine, inviting her here to dine with you, a private dinner with a single friend, this evening. She already knows who that friend will be," cried the count.

"Your wooing speeds well, then, as I said it would."

"Splendidly!"

"But, my dear count, there is a serious obstacle in the way to-night."

"Pray, what is it?"

"I had already arranged for that poor dupe of ours, Ned Zane, to be here."

"That need not interfere. He does not know Georgine, and we can soon get him so intoxicated he will not be in the way."

"Very well. I will write the note you desire, and make suitable arrangements for her reception."

She went to a table, opened a writing-desk inlaid with pearl and gold, and wrote two notes of invitation, one to him, the other to the lady.

"And now, count," she said, "excuse me. I expect a visitor in a very short time whom I must see alone, and I know you are in haste to apprise your fair conquest of her invitation here."

"Very true, fair Stella, very true. Accept my thanks until I can more adequately reward you."

The count was gone and the lady hurriedly opened her chamber door, for she suddenly remembered a case of jewellery which she had left on her toilet table, and in it was the diamond set so lately given to her by Edward Zane.

Springing into the chamber, she looked wildly around for an instant and then a faint scream left her lips. The jewel-case was gone. So was Ragged Dick.

An open window by which he could reach the garden in the rear of the house told the manner of his exit. And a gate, yet open, leading to an alleyway in the rear told her he was clear of the premises.

She rang a bell hurriedly, and when the same servant who had announced Count Volchini appeared she said:

"James, go at once to the police headquarters, inquire at the detective department for the gentleman whose name is on this card. Tell him I have an important piece of work for him. I have been robbed!"

"Robbed, ma'am? Surely not by the count!"

"No—no—that ragged elf of a boy. I wanted to talk with him and sent him in there while the count was here, forgetting that my jewel-case was on the toilet table!"

"I'll hasten, ma'am—and shall I not at once describe the boy to the officer? I remember his looks and dress perfectly."

"You need only ask the officer to come here, James. Such a smart thief will soon change his appearance, and without doubt he has confederates."

"But should I see him in the street, ma'am, as I may—"

"Seize him of course and give him in charge. And now make haste, James. I shall need you this evening. I expect company and prefer your attendance to that of any other servant."

James hurried away. Well paid and well treated he could not see any fault in his mistress.

CHAPTER XIX.

FLUSHED and excited, just before twilight, Edward Zane returned to his home—not so much excited with drink as with apparent pleasure, though Anna did smell the fumes of wine when she met him with a kiss.

"The yacht is mine. I tried her to-day, and she suits me to perfection!" he cried. "I gave the builder his own price—five thousand pounds!"

"Oh, Edward!"

"What harm, my little wife, is there in my purchasing a yacht? All the first men of position and wealth own yachts."

"But, Edward, you could do so much good with five thousand pounds."

"Bah! I shall spend double that amount on her before she is what I want her to be in splendour. What is a thousand pounds to me now?"

"Not long since, Edward, it was beyond your dreams; and remember that riches can melt away in extravagance and dissipation."

"Nonsense! do not begin preaching to me now! I'll go and hear your friend Talmage on Sunday, if you don't disgust me by sermonizing before."

Anna sighed and turned away. Her heart was indeed heavy now.

"I will order dinner," she said. "I have waited for you."

"Foolish little woman! We had lunch on board, and I am to dine out this evening."

"At that club?"

"No; not at that club, madam, but I may find myself there before I return. The fact is, little one, free from business now, I feel like a colt in a big pasture—I want to kick up my heels, run round, and enjoy my freedom; and the less you fret about it the happier you will be. Now let us make a bargain."

"A bargain between man and wife, Edward!"

"Yes, a bargain! You may have all the money you want, and do just as you please. I will find no fault. Either mope at home or go out; just suit yourself. Your own carriage can take you anywhere you desire, and—"

"Stop, Edward! I do not wish to hear you talk this way. I begin to believe that your fortune has turned your brain—that you are becoming crazy. I do not want money or carriages. I want your love—nothing more, nothing less!"

"Love? That will do for folks who have nothing else. What does a millionaire, with all the world's pleasures at his command, want of love? It is at best an uneasy possession. It fills hearts with jealousies; it makes men foolish and women perverse."

"Oh, Edward! to hear this from you, who were once so tender and so—"

"Foolish!"

The husband thus broke in upon her words, while he drew out a new watch, cased with brilliants, and noted the time.

"I must be off," he cried. "I have just time to meet my engagement."

He did not pause to say good-bye or to utter a single kind word, not even to see the tear-cloud in her eyes about to send forth the heart's wild rain of bitterness, but dashed from the room as if life was dependent on his keeping that engagement—an engagement to dine with a woman who was luring him down into the depths of ruin.

He went, and she, that wronged yet loving wife, sank to a seat and wept bitterly.

She was thus weeping when Mary came in. It was new to her to see the kindest mistress she had ever known thus affected.

Until lately so cheery, ever busy at some pleasant home duty, singing from hour to hour, she had looked on Mrs. Zane as the happiest wife in all the world.

She now stood perplexed. She did not know what to do or say. She wished to comfort one who had ever been kind to her, but she did not know how. Had it been one of her own class the good-hearted creature would have known what to say at once. As it was she listened to the sobs which shook that little figure and wrung her hands in silence.

It was a relief to hear the ring of the bell at the front door to call her away from a scene so painful, so pitiful. For when one hears another sob, or sees another weep, hard indeed is the heart which does not swell up in sympathy.

When Mary heard the ring of the bell she breathed a sigh of relief and went to answer it.

The next minute she came rushing back and cried out to her mistress:

"Oh, ma'am, rouse up, please. There's two strange men in the house—they rushed right in as soon as I opened the door, and asking nothing came right along—and there they are!"

Hearing Mary's cry, Mrs. Zane roused herself as well as she could, and rose indignantly to confront the intruders.

Mary had already rushed to the grate for her favourite weapon, the iron poker, and she now stood ready to do battle in defence of her beloved mistress.

Mrs. Zane saw a red-faced and red-haired man, with bushy red whiskers, standing before her. He wore a huge watch chain, and, though not fashionably dressed, had on expensive clothes and jewellery. He wore a bold, and she thought a very impudent look, and she turned from it to see if his companion looked like him before she said a word.

That companion looked like a better man. He was quite old, with a thick head of very white hair and bushy eyebrows. One of his eyes had been hurt, or it was weak, for he wore a green shade over it. The dress of this man was good, but not fashionable.

"What do you want here? Why this intrusion?" cried the astonished lady.

"Dish man vos say he vos relations mit you," said the red-headed man.

"A relation to a lady like her—the old scarecrow. Be off with you before I knock your thick head off," cried Mary, angrily.

"I don't know either of you. Go away at once, or I will have the police summoned!" said Mrs. Zane, now regaining firmness and composure.

"So you would turn your poor old father out of doors. That is rather cruel, Anna!" said the old, white-haired, farmer-looking man, in his natural tone of voice.

"Oh, father, dear father, it is indeed you. But why are you disguised and in such company?" cried Anna, rushing forward and embracing her father.

"For your good, dear child!" said Mr. Evarts. "And my company is an excellent man—Mr. Stokey, the detective. I came here, Anna, more to test my disguise than for any other purpose, for I knew if you did not recognize me your husband surely could not. Mr. Stokey and myself are going to do all we can to save him from the harpies that are striving to rob and ruin him."

"Oh, Heaven give you success!" cried the young wife. "His fortune seems to have crazed him. He was here for only a few minutes this evening, and said he was going out to dine!"

"Did he say he would dine at his club-room, madam?" the detective asked.

"No, sir—he said he was engaged to dine with a friend, but would visit the club before he got back!"

"Then we'll find him, Mr. Evarts. I think I know where the friends are with whom he would be most likely to dine!"

"I hope we will, and that, when he and they are unmasked, shame will make him reform and return to my abused child, while his tempers abandon in confusion the work they have begun."

"There may be hope for him, but they're past hope," said Stokey, with an air and tone of confidence. "But we had better be moving, sir. Time is precious to a man in my line."

"I am ready, sir," said Mr. Evarts. "Mary, you can lay down your poker now. I am glad to see you so ready to defend your mistress. Here is a sovereign to buy a new dress with."

"Thank you, sir. You have a kind heart, sir, and I'll not forget it. I am glad I hadn't the poker in my hand when you pushed in, or I might have killed you out and out before I knew who you were."

"I think my lot would have been a hard one in that case," said Mr. Everts, smiling.

"I would have been indeed, sir; but, thank you again, sir, and I'm glad I didn't have the poker then."

Mr. Everts and the detective now left the room, accompanied as far as the front door by Anna Zane.

"Do, dear father, be careful in venturing among bad men," said Anna. "Your disguise would not avail you among those who rob and murder."

"He needn't fear, ma'am—he needn't fear while Old Stoker's with him. The rascals know me, ma'am, and they fear me too. Your father is safe with me—you may bet your life on that!"

Anna smiled as she closed the door, while they passed on.

When Count Volchini left the mansion of Stella Hayden with the note of invitation for Georgine he bent his course to the shop of a florist with whom he was acquainted.

The count selected a very fine and expensive bouquet, filled with very choice flowers.

"Send this to the address on the note immediately, if you please."

The florist instantly despatched the bouquet by a smart lad, and thanked his customer in language which showed that he knew him as an old patron.

Volchini sauntered out when he had completed his errand to the florist, and took a stroll to show off his own elegant person.

The promenade of Volchini was suddenly shortened at the corner of a street in consequence of his meeting Barnaby Bludge.

The latter beckoned to him to leave the throng, intimating by a look that he had something important to communicate.

Volchini at once joined him.

"What would you tell me?" he asked, at once.

"Zane has purchased the yacht. I have been down on a trial trip with him."

"Good as far as it goes. Though I do not see as it will help us in any of our plans."

"It can be made to do so."

"How?"

"He needs a captain and crew. We must furnish them and put men there that we can use."

"The idea is good. But I know no sea-faring men. I never associate with men of that class. They are so vulgar."

"You have seen a man known as 'Bonny Doon' playing heavily at my tables?"

"Yes—a very odd individual."

"Well, he is a sailor. We must manage to get him in command of the new yacht, which, by the way, is to be known as the 'Stellarita.' Zane had to drag Stella into it some way. He is wildly infatuated with her! Well, Bonny Doon must be worked in as captain of the yacht. Leave the selection of a crew to him, and he will have such men as he and we can use."

"Can we trust this Bonny Doon?"

"Yes. I hold his life in my hands. He committed a fearful murder some years ago, and by good fortune I caught him coming from the house of his victim. I took pains then, though he did not know that I had detected his signs of guilt, to track him at once to his hiding-place and then to hedge him in so that he has never dared to go beyond my reach."

"Why doesn't he murder you to destroy your evidence?"

"Because I have shown him, to his terrible satisfaction, that the day I am missed descriptions of him and his crime will be unsealed in the detective offices of every principal city in the world. He dares not harm a hair of my head and trembles lest some accident might cut me off and thus endanger him. He will do anything and everything I tell him to do. He has a band of desperadoes at his service, and of these he will select a crew. The only thing for us to do is to get Zane to employ Bonny Doon as captain."

"That can be effected I think. I will try it this evening, for he is to dine with me at the house of Stella."

"Here are certificates and letters of character which I have had prepared."

The gambler handed several papers to Volchini.

"Ah! you gave a name here, beside Bonny Doon. These papers recommend Captain Phorretterre, a gentleman of French descent, of noble extraction and brilliant education, who has met reverses—nicknamed 'Bonny Doon' in consequence of his splendid singing of that ancient melody."

"Yes, I thought it would interest one like Zane if we made up a story like this. It is easy to blind a man who can be kept under the influence of drink continually. And Zane has got into drinking pretty deep, you know."

"Yes, if we can only keep him so. But every influence will be brought to bear to get him away from our power."

"A fig for influence when he likes liquor as well as he seems to. If we can keep him in hand, and Stella holds him in thrall, we are good for a fortune."

"Yes, if we can! But by-by. I must move on or some of our police friends will take note of this interview."

"Never, they're too keen to think we'd do business in the street. They know it isn't our way. But I'll be off to see Bonny Doon and get him posted, and you can play your part of the game."

"There you are with your vulgarity again. Game puts one in mind of horrible, fatiguing base-ball, billiards, and so on. Say that I will execute my portion of the programme."

"Anything to suit your fastidious fancy, count. So long; do your prettiest to-night, and we will have the yacht at our command instead of his."

(To be continued.)

FIGHTING WITH FATE.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE Waldemar town house was wrapped in silence. The hour was past midnight.

The lights burned dimly in hall and library, for Lord Waldemar had not returned from Westminster, and would probably yet be absent for some hours. The hall porter had retired from his post for the night. Darrel Moor was in his own room, his thoughts busy with the past and the future.

Many grave problems were pressing heavily upon his mind, but he was well content with his prospects.

In Miss Floyd's chamber the heiress and Mrs. Watchley awaited the promised visit of Lord Waldemar's business manager.

Miss Floyd's fair face wore a sullen and fretful expression.

She was in a rebellious and angry mood, Mrs. Watchley having undertaken to lecture her upon her recent conduct toward Lord Waldemar, and her outbreak of wrath had effectually quelled her companion, who sat weeping, and regarding the girl with furtive glances of apprehension.

"Why should Mr. Grimrod come to my room at this hour?" exclaimed Miss Floyd, knitting her brows.

"I dismissed my maid an hour since, and yet he keeps me waiting. How dared he speak to me in that manner in the drawing-room to-night? I am nearly determined to refuse to see him if he should come."

"You dare not refuse to see him, Hilda," said Mrs. Watchley, grimly. "He has a good reason for all he does or says you may be certain. You have had your own way all your life long, but in Grimrod you've found your master."

The girl's face reddened as if she had been struck a blow.

She was about to reply angrily when a low and cautious rap was heard, the door opened gently, and the manager stole into the room, turning the key in the lock behind him.

He was dressed in his usual close-fitting black garb, and now wore list slippers and a snug little skull cap.

His face was as impassive as usual, cool, calm, and inscrutable, but there was a red glint in his eyes that showed Mrs. Watchley that he was in no pleasant mood.

He addressed himself to the elder lady without taking any notice of Miss Floyd.

"I am surprised, madam," he said, "with the result of your training. Is this girl the gentle creature you need to write me about, in such strong terms of praise? Is this girl the high-bred, refined, and cultured lady of whom you wrote with such enthusiasm? Whatever she was by nature you have spoiled her."

Mrs. Watchley broke out into hysterical sobbing, while Hilda looked the astonishment she felt at the terms applied to herself by Grimrod.

"I have petted and humoured her," said Mrs. Watchley, in a broken, incoherent voice, "but it was because she never could bear to be crossed in anything. She always would have her own way from babyhood. She was born wilful and headstrong and selfish, and what is born in one cannot be easily eradicated even by assiduous training. And—and I have loved her with all her faults."

"A pretty creature you have made of her!" said Grimrod, his lip curling. "Is it for such a result as this that I have toiled and schemed all these long years? One might say, Mrs. Watchley, that you have done your best to involve all three of us in a common ruin, with your dotting fondness and your absurd submission to this foolish girl's whims. If we are ruined remember to take a fair share of credit to yourself."

He turned abruptly towards the girl.

"Hilda!" he said, in the tone of a master, the red spark in his eyes flickering. "What did you mean

by your insane conduct below this evening? Why did you break out upon Lord Waldemar in that manner, when you knew that to-morrow would set you free from his authority for ever? Idiot! Little, miserable idiot! could you not have restrained your temper for once?"

His taunting words, his tone and manner, stirred up all the evil in the girl's nature.

"How dare you speak to me in that way?" she flashed. "I will summon the household. I will have you ejected from my room. Lord Waldemar shall dismiss you from his service."

She bounded towards the bell-pull.

Grimrod was there before her, and he tossed the tasselled cord over an adjacent picture-frame, placing it beyond her reach.

"At least I can scream," said the girl, literally foaming with rage. "I will—"

Grimrod seized her arm in a rough grip and forced her into a chair, standing over her with a face that awed her into sudden calmness.

"You will make an outcry at your peril," he exclaimed. "Girl! you are in my power. I have come to your room to-night to teach you that I am your master, and that you are only a puppet in my hands to obey my will. Do you understand?"

"You think, perhaps, that the possession of those eight letters which I wrote to Antonio Frivoli places me in your power," said Miss Floyd, in a choking voice. "Frivoli is dead, and the letters are not worth the paper they are written on. Grandpapa would think you a pitiful sneak if you were to bring those letters to him. I don't care if you publish them in every paper in England. Grandpapa could not be more angry at me than he is now, but as I should tell him the whole story he would dismiss you on the spot, like an unfaithful servant as you are. Bah! I'm not afraid of you; and her voice grew stronger and her eyes began to flash anew.

"Let go my arm! Take your hand off me!"

Grimrod obeyed.

The girl sprang again to her feet. She began to think that she had in her turn awed him.

"You are right in your remarks about the letters," said the manager, coolly. "I cannot use them without injuring myself. Lord Waldemar would never forgive me for publishing them. It is true I can take the letters to his lordship and tell him that I bought them of a foreign adventurer, but it is not my purpose to farther incense the baron against you. We will say that the letters are useless to me. Yet I have still a claim upon you which will bend you to my will."

"You refer to that secret which Frivoli declared to me—that I am not the real Hilda Floyd?" said the girl, unconsciously lowering her voice to a whisper.

The manager assented.

"I don't care the snap of my finger for that," said Miss Floyd. "If I am not the real heiress who is ever to know the fact? The real Hilda is dead, or so lost that she will never be found. You will never dare to declare the truth. You will never dare to go to Lord Waldemar and say: 'My lord, this young lady is not your grand-daughter. You have affirmed that I am his lordship's descendant. You told him that the proofs of my identity are overwhelming. If you were to make such a statement to him he would turn upon you and accuse you—not me—of the imposture.'"

Grimrod seemed surprised at this display of keen reasoning faculties.

"You are by no means stupid, girl," he said, not ill pleased.

"I rather think not," observed Miss Floyd, with growing complacency. "But I believe that story of Frivoli to be false. You think to trade upon it. I am not a child in intellect, Mr. Grimrod. I have the peculiar marks upon me that distinguished the real Hilda Floyd. How did I come by the dagger-shaped birthmark and the scar on my wrist if they are not legitimate? You see that you cannot impose upon me, or trade upon my fears. Frivoli frightened me that night, and in my haste and excitement I believed his words. I have thought them over enough since to convince myself that he spoke falsely, thinking to intimidate me."

"It would look so," said the manager.

Miss Floyd's spirits rose at the apparent concession, and her face resumed its supercilious expression.

"You came in here calling yourself my master!" she exclaimed. "You have reckoned without your host, Mr. Grimrod. By this time you must have discovered that I am your mistress. If you haven't allow me to remind you that I can denounce you any day as the murderer of Antonio Frivoli, who died so mysteriously at the little inn in Yorkshire. And I am perfectly willing to so denounce you, if you presume again. I will write to the coroner at Wolverton and cause Frivoli's body to be exhumed and examined by medi-

real experts, and I myself will testify, if I be driven to it, that he left my room to go with you to your house upon that night in which he died. I know that you poisoned him to death; I know this as if I had seen it, and I am not afraid to testify."

Grimrod's face became covered with a vivid pallor, but the flickering spark in his eyes burned now steadily and fiercely, and his countenance was as impassive as ever.

"Hilda, Hilda!" moaned Mrs. Watchley. "You don't know what you say."

"Let her talk, madam," said the manager, with his Mephistophelean smile. "The babble of the young is always pleasant to me, and even babble like this is hardly tiresome. The girl's spirit is fine; her sense perhaps not so good."

Miss Floyd coloured.

"My 'souse' is too keen to permit me to become the prey of a schemer like you," she said, sharply. "I have got the upper hand, and I mean to keep it. You dare not say anything to Lord Waldemar against me, and I dare denounce you as Frivoli's murderer! Who is master now? I desire you to relieve me of your presence immediately. When I become Baroness Waldemar I'll dismiss you—I'll have you kicked out like some troublesome dog. Now go."

She pointed imperiously toward the door. "One moment, my dear young lady," said the manager, coolly. "Before you summon the servants to expel me from your room, and before you decide irrevocably upon having me 'kicked out' like some troublesome dog" when you become Lady Waldemar, I have a few words to say to you. In the first place, when I told you that there was a flaw in your claims upon Lord Waldemar, I told you the truth. Frivoli was right. You are not the real Hilda Floyd."

"I don't believe you."

"You will before I shall have finished. The real Hilda Floyd, if alive, is living a peasant existence somewhere. She may be already married, she may be a domestic servant, a 'hewer of wood and a drawer of water,' all unconscious of her claims to a wealthy and ancient barony. But you are a usurper, an impostor, and no Floyd at all."

His tones impressed Hilda.

"Who then am I?" she asked, involuntarily.

A strange smile curled the manager's lips. He glowered at her as he said, slowly:

"Your real name is Hilda Grimrod. You are my daughter!"

The girl uttered a cry of rage and incredulity. "It is true," affirmed the manager, calmly. "You are my daughter, the sole offspring of my marriage to a lady who died at your birth."

"It is impossible. I won't believe it—I won't."

"When my wife died," continued Grimrod, unheeding her wild exclamation, "I took you to Leeds myself, your nurse being ill, and consigned you to the care of your aunt, your mother's sister, a widow lady just then in infirm health."

"My—my aunt?"

"Yes, your aunt, Mrs. Watchley."

The girl seemed paralyzed.

"Mrs. Watchley had never visited at my house," said Grimrod, "owing to the state of her health, which at that time was somewhat precarious. She assumed the whole charge of you, however, and I returned to the manor. When you were about a year old there arrived from Wallace Floyd's young widow a letter addressed to Squire Floyd, stating the fact that she had a child with certain marks upon its person, and that this child was a girl, and it happened by a singular coincidence that this child was nearly the same age with my daughter. I copied the letter, and hid the original in Squire Floyd's safe. Six months later came the letter announcing Mrs. Floyd's death. I hid that letter also, not destroying it as the squire had commanded me to do with all letters coming from his son or his son's wife. I gave those letters the appearance of having been unopened. I pretended about that time that my child had died. I went to Leeds, told Mrs. Watchley of a plan I had conceived, and secured her co-operation. I remembered the dagger-shaped birthmark on Wallace Floyd's arm, having seen it more than once, and I inflicted a wound with a knife upon my child's arm that would be likely to correspond with that birthmark. I also inflicted a wound upon your wrist answering to the description of the one upon the arm of little Hilda Floyd."

"It is all true!" groaned Mrs. Watchley. "Every word is true!"

Miss Floyd sat motionless and speechless, merely staring from one to the other of her relatives.

"I sent Mrs. Watchley with my child to Innsbruck," continued the manager, "with instructions to bring you up as a lady, calling you Hilda Floyd, and teaching you from your earliest childhood that you were the grand-daughter of a rich Yorkshire squire, to

whose fortune you would some day succeed. I gave Mrs. Watchley a liberal allowance of money. You were provided with the best teachers and governesses. I never went near you in all those years, contenting myself with your aunt's account of your progress and with the photographs of you which she frequently sent me. If the real Hilda Floyd had been brought to England by her nurse I should have found means to send the woman away without permitting her to see the squire, and I would have assumed charge of the child. But she never came. She probably died at Malta, or on the Mediterranean. When my lord sent me abroad in search of his grand-daughter I pretended to make a thorough search for her everywhere. In truth I did search for some trace of the real Hilda. Finding none, I went to Innsbruck, and brought you and your aunt home to England. I never intended to tell you all this, but you have forced me to speak. I have told you the exact truth, and I swear to it."

Hilda could no longer affect a doubt she did not feel. She knew that Grimrod had told her the truth—that he was her own father.

A change as deep as it was sudden manifested itself in her manners.

"Do—do you suppose Lord Waldemar suspects the imposture?" she whispered.

"Certainly not. How should he? You do not look like me. He thinks that you resemble the Arlyns—ha, ha! If he did suspect the imposture you may be sure that this house would not be big enough to hold him in his wrath."

"Does Darrel Moor suspect it?"

"No, indeed. No one suspects it but we three. The suspicion of it was fatal to Frivoli. Darrel Moor would not marry you if he had the faintest suspicion of the truth. He is the true heir. I am satisfied that the real Hilda is dead. I have schemed all your life to make you Baroness Waldemar. To make your position secure beyond all peradventure you must marry the heir. Once Darrel Moor's wife you will be doubly the heiress. Now you comprehend why I have urged on your marriage with him."

"Yes, I comprehend."

"Should the true nurse employed by Mrs. Floyd ever appear she could not harm you if you were entrenched as Darrel Moor's wife," said the manager. "I have thought of everything. All will be secure when you are once safely married to Moor. My father was manager to the Floyds before me. He was never tired of rehearsing to me the glories of the family. He taught me that to serve them was next to being a Floyd. When I grew up and took his place at his death, I knew the wealth of the family, my soul was filled with bitterness and envy that they should have all and that I should be their servant. I would have sold my soul to be owner of Floyd Manor. And when an opportunity occurred to foist a child of mine in the place of the real heiress I was ready to do it. You know my success. My lord trusts me as his one faithful friend in all the world. He could not even dream of my treachery to him. Nelson Grimrod is to him the incarnation of dog-like fidelity."

The manager's lip curled in a sneer as he concluded.

"I can hardly realize all this," murmured Hilda.

"No, very likely. You see now, Hilda, that your interests and mine are identical. We can stand by each other. I will befriend you in this marriage, and if Lord Waldemar should remain incensed against you I will support you and your husband until you come into the barony. I shall find my happiness in your exalted position. Shall we be friends, Hilda?"

The girl hesitated. "She felt at that moment as if she hated Grimrod with all her soul. She felt inclined to defy him, knowing that although he had exalted her to her present position he could not abase her without ruining himself. But she knew also that she might need his aid, pecuniary or otherwise, and policy and selfishness conquered passion, and she said:

"Yes, we will be friends. Let what I have said be forgotten."

She held out her hand to him. "He pressed it in his."

"You must apologize to-morrow to Lord Waldemar," he remarked. "Make your peace with him, if possible. Humble yourself to him, Hilda, and if you can force a few tears so much the better. His friendship is greatly to be desired by you, for he may live thirty years yet."

"Unless he should die by 'visitation of Providence,' as Frivoli did," said the girl, with a furtive glance up into his face. "But of course that could not be possible. Lord Waldemar is a more conspicuous personage than was the unknown foreign adventurer. I'll make my peace with his lordship to-morrow. Having caught a glimpse of the stake, I'll play every winning card I own. You can trust me to restore myself to his lordship's favour."

CHAPTER XLIV.

It was two o'clock in the morning when Grimrod stole back to his own room as silently as he had stolen from it two hours earlier.

The lights still burned dimly in the lower rooms. Lord Waldemar had not yet come home. Darrel Moor was asleep in his room, and the manager believed that his midnight visit to the rooms of the heiress was a secret known all save Hilda and Mrs. Watchley.

At the usual hour the next morning Darrel Moor and Grimrod joined Mrs. Watchley in the breakfast-room. Lord Waldemar would not rise until noon, and Hilda was therefore obliged to defer her apologies to his lordship until after her marriage.

At nine o'clock Grimrod left the house to visit the solicitor who attended to certain investments of his funds, but promised Moor to be present at the church to give away the bride.

At ten o'clock Darrel Moor, faultlessly attired, also went out, after enjoining Hilda to meet him at St. Jude's punctually at eleven.

Almost immediately after his departure Mrs. Watchley announced to the housekeeper in a casual way that she should not be in at luncheon—the day being so fine she had decided to take her charge to Sydenham upon a little excursion.

"Miss Floyd has not yet seen the Crystal Palace, Mrs. Poss," she condescended to explain, and there is a fine flower show there to-day if see by the morning papers. We shall be home to dinner, be good enough to say to Lord Waldemar. And now order the carriage for Miss Floyd, please, to convey us to Victoria station."

Mrs. Poss hastened to comply.

At half-past ten the carriage was at the door, and Miss Floyd and Mrs. Watchley swept down the grand staircase and made their way to the vehicle.

The April day was unusually fine, there being a bright sunshine and an atmosphere unusually mild and clear for London.

Miss Floyd was attired in an elegant carriage dress of heavy pale blue silk, made with a train, and richly ornamented with white lace.

She wore a jacket of pale blue velvet, also trimmed with white lace, and a coquettish little white lace hat, enwreathed with blue forget-me-nots, crowned the wonderful structure of her fair hair.

Boots and gloves alike of pale blue kid, with white buttons, completed her toilet.

"She do look like a bride," murmured Mrs. Poss, peeping out at her basement window in a glow of admiration, "though of course a bride do wear white. I should think she would spoil all her nice clothes in the railway, though to be sure, what is expense to the quality?"

Mrs. Watchley was dressed in an exquisite moiré, and wore an Indian shawl.

She followed Miss Floyd into the carriage, settling her voluminous draperies to her satisfaction, the footman put up the steps and mounted to his place, and the coachman drove to the Victoria station.

Here the ladies alighted.

The footman piloted the ladies into the waiting-room, procured their tickets, and conducted them to a first-class carriage.

"Train starts in seven minutes, Miss Floyd," he observed as he closed the carriage door. "You will have this compartment to yourselves. At what hour will you have the carriage come for you this evening?"

"At six, James. You need not wait now. The horses are restive," said Hilda.

The footman bowed and retreated.

He had scarcely disappeared when Mrs. Watchley summoned a guard to open the door.

"I do believe I have forgotten my pocket-book," she exclaimed. "How provoking! We shall have to take a later train. Come, Hilda."

The two ladies alighted and walked along the platform, holding up their trains.

"That was cleverly managed," said Mrs. Watchley as they passed the waiting-room and gained the street. "The carriage is gone. No one can inform Lord Waldemar of our movements, Hilda, and consequently he can't appear at the church to stop the wedding."

She signalled a passing cab and gave the order, "To St. Jude's," and assisted Hilda into the vehicle, herself following.

They arrived at the church in good time, ordered the cabman to wait, and passed in beneath the stone archway, through the vestibule into the great, dim church, with its grand memorial windows, its quaint carved pulpit and reading-desk, its ornamented chancel rail, and its tender flood of rosy lights contrasting with dusky shadows.

Grimrod and Darrel Moor were in waiting near the door.

The former offered his arm to Hilda, who walked beside him up the aisle, her long train sweeping the carpet with silken rustle.

Moer gave his support to Mrs. Watchley, and they also marched up toward the chancel.

The rector and curate were in waiting.

The former, in the robes of his office, was reading the marriage licence, which Moer had just placed in his hands.

He looked up in some apparent surprise at the smallness of the bridal party, but resumed his reading, perusing the document to its close.

Moer was secretly anxious and uneasy. He feared at this last moment that the beautiful Hungarian countess might appear to stop his marriage, albeit she could know nothing of his present purpose.

He feared that Sir Hugh Tregaron might burst in upon him and forbid the marriage and avow his—Moer's—real character to Miss Floyd and Grimrod.

"Once let either Hilda or the manager suspect the Gilt marriage, or the fact that Carmine Roff is my lawful and living wife, and my game is up," he said to himself, desperately. "I wish the words were said that bind Hilda Floyd to me. I am impatient to secure my heiress."

The curate motioned to the two principal actors to take their proper places. The impressive marriage ceremony was commenced.

Grimrod, when called upon, gave away the bride. Moer produced the wedding-ring. Mrs. Watchley cried softly behind her lace handkerchief, as was proper and fashionable.

The contracting pair knelt at the right moment, made the responses, and arose after the clergyman's prayer—man and wife!

As the benediction of the clergyman fell upon the wedded pair Darrel Moer's heart gave a great leap of exultation.

He had had grand dreams all his life of wedding some titled and wealthy lady, and he believed that he had now reached their fulfilment.

"I am secure," he thought as he arose to his feet,—"perfectly secure. I can manage Honor in one way or another. As to the countess, she may not dare to expose me. I am sure now to succeed to the barony of Waldemar, in right of my wife, if not in my own right, and I'm sure of wealth unlimited. After all I've done well."

The thoughts of his bride, as she shook out the folds of her dress, were not less pleasing.

"I am secure," she said in her own heart, delightedly. "If I do not succeed to the barony of Waldemar in my own right I shall do so in right of my husband. Let what will happen, my fortune is assured!"

The bridal party adjourned to the vestry, and appended their names to the official entry of the marriage in the church register.

Then Grimrod and Mrs. Watchley congratulated the bridegroom, and wished all happiness to the bride. Moer, having paid a handsome tribute to the officiating clergyman, there was nothing to cause them to linger, and Grimrod conducted his party into the outer church.

As the manager glanced back, and a flood of ruddy light fell upon his face, Hilda noticed that he looked ill. His face was actually haggard, even while, with the force of his powerful will, he showed a smile upon his lips. He looked indeed as if some great trouble had suddenly come upon him, and Hilda's thoughts flew to her great secret. Was exposure of her false position threatened?

"Where are we to go now?" asked Grimrod, halting at the church door.

"To Victoria station," said Mrs. Watchley, promptly, not having observed the change in Grimrod. "We must go to the Crystal Palace, and have a whole day to ourselves. I have telegraphed to have an elegant dinner in a private room."

"I wish we had chosen some more retired place in which to spend the day," said the manager. "So many bridal parties go to Sydenham that I fear we shall be mistaken for one. To-day there is a flower-show, and all West End will be there. Still, if we have a private room, and keep to ourselves, there may be no harm done."

"There are to be a concert and fireworks this evening," said Mrs. Watchley, "but we cannot stay for them. We shall get away from the Palace before the crowd arrives."

They entered the cab and drove to Victoria station.

A train was on the point of departure. They secured a compartment of a first-class carriage and steamed swiftly down to Sydenham, alighting in the Palace grounds.

They did not immediately go into the Palace but wandered about the lawns and gardens, surveying the ponds and the stone fac-similes of antediluvian monsters, and finally made their way up the long avenue and into the cool building.

Grimrod had been very silent since leaving London.

Even Moer saw that there was something amiss

with him, and his guilty soul gave a great throb of apprehension.

"Suppose we go to our private room," he said. "We are all tired, and the exhibition rooms are crowded already."

The others agreed, and the party proceeded to the dining-room, gave their names, and were ushered into a cozy little parlour which had been especially prepared for their reception.

"We will retain the room until six o'clock," said Moer, giving the waiter a handsome gratuity. "Let dinner be served at three."

The waiter withdrew. Moer locked the door after him.

Mrs. Watchley and Hilda removed their bonnets and wrappings. Grimrod walked to the window.

Moer followed him.

"What's the matter, Grimrod?" he asked, clapping the manager on the shoulder. "You act as if you were in serious trouble."

Hilda and Mrs. Watchley, each in secret perturbation, and each wearing false smiles, drew near.

"I am in trouble," said Grimrod, "and I may as well own the fact to you, particularly as my trouble concerns you both equally with myself."

Moer and Hilda alike started. Each thought of his and her terrible secret.

"I have needed all my strength of will to keep my distress to myself until this moment," continued the manager. "I kept it from you at church because you were so absorbed in each other you had no glances for me. But you must know the truth now. I have employed a solicitor, doing business near to Temple Gardens, to invest my money for me—the savings of many years as Squire Floyd's and Lord Waldemar's business agent, and the result of successful speculations upon my own part. He embarked my money in two enterprises, one in India, one in Australia, guaranteeing me twenty per cent. profit. Yesterday came letters to him from both quarters. The two bubbles had burst. The diamond mine in India contained no diamonds, the railway company in Australia in which my money was invested after paying handsome dividends last year has just failed, paying not one penny in the pound."

"I am surprised," exclaimed Moer. "I don't see how you could have been so taken in, Grimrod."

"I was in too great haste to increase my fortune, and so lost all," said the manager. "I am not the first one taken in. The enterprises seemed genuine and conducted by well-known honest men. I have now only my salary as Lord Waldemar's business manager."

There was a grave silence, finally broken by Moer.

"Then you can't keep us in luxury as you promised?" he inquired.

"No; my money is gone."

"What then are we to do?"

"You must make friends with your uncle. All depends upon Lord Waldemar. If he should cast you off you must share the fate of Wallace Floyd, or live from hand to mouth until his lordship dies," said the manager, gloomily.

The others looked appalled at this prospect.

"My uncle will fly into a rage when he learns that we are married," said Moer. "He will declare that we have cheated and mocked him. I own, Grimrod, my chief dependence has been upon you and your money. I shall not dare go to my uncle this evening and tell him that Hilda and I have been to church together after his absolute refusal to allow us to marry under three years."

"What are we to do then?" said Hilda, repeating Moer's question of the previous moment.

"You must apologize to your grandfather to-day, Hilda," said the manager, with decision. "We are in no condition now to dictate terms. You must humble yourself to him and try to win his affection. That is the first step. The announcement of your marriage to Darrel Moer must not be made until you shall have ingratiated yourself with Lord Waldemar, even if you are obliged to keep the secret a month or more."

"That looks reasonable," said Moer. "I am willing to wait a month for my bride if the delay is necessary. Until we can win his lordship to some expression of kindly feeling for you, Hilda, you shall be to me still Miss Floyd and nothing more. The consciousness that you are really my wife is an inexpressible comfort to me. Knowing that you are bound to me by ties that Lord Waldemar cannot break, I am willing to allow you the largest liberty."

"Everything now depends upon Hilda," said Grimrod. "She must win Lord Waldemar's affection. It cannot be too late. The feat cannot be impossible. Be careful not to betray your secret until the proper moment. This very evening Hilda must practise her arts of fascination upon her grandfather."

They ate their dinner at the appointed hour, and at half-past five or a little later took the train back to town.

They all returned to the house in Park Lane in the Waldemar carriage, which was in waiting.

"You must make your appeal to his lordship this very evening," said Moer, assisting Hilda from the carriage. "Remember, as Grimrod says, our fortunes now hang upon you."

(To be continued.)

PAULINE'S LOVERS.

PAULINE had her troubles.

"Pauline," Eugene said, gently, "you were riding with Mr. Eastman yesterday."

"You are quite right," she replied, defiantly.

"Darling, I ask you not to go about with him."

"Am I not to go out with any one but those to whom you extend your royal favour? You have begun dictating a little too early, sir."

"Oh, Pauline! you know I never intended to dictate. But Mr. Eastman isn't a man with whom any woman ought to be on friendly terms."

"Don't insinuate. Say you are jealous at once."

"Jealous of him! I wouldn't insult you so. But he isn't a fit associate. Ask Lucia."

"Lucia! indeed! I don't choose to go to any man's sister for instructions."

"But, dear, listen to me. You can't know Eastman as I do—as we all do. It isn't for myself that I am speaking. I wish you would trust me this once. Promise me."

"Indeed I shall do no such thing. I shall ride with Mr. Eastman when I please. He isn't 'too busy' to sometimes give me a breath of fresh air."

"Then I must insist," he continued, gravely.

"Then I shall deny your right. I will not be treated like a child. If it has come to that we had better separate."

"Pauline, my darling, think of what you are saying. I'm sure I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. If you were my sister I should feel that I must say this."

"I'm not your sister, fortunately. I shall never be anything else to you than I am now. There is your ring," she added, wrenching it off her hand. "I will not wear it any longer."

"Do you mean this, Pauline? Reflect upon what you are saying," he appealed, sorrowfully.

"Will you go?" she cried, stamping her foot.

"Yes," he said, quietly.

She stood quite still where he left her till she heard the hall door shut behind him. Then the evil spirit departed from her. With a cry she ran out to the steps. He had turned the corner of the street, and was out of sight.

"He will come again, and then—he shall know that I am sorry."

The ring lay where she had dropped it. She put it on, and then went and tried to busy herself about her work.

You will think her very bad tempered and silly, this pretty Pauline Elmore. But she was not. She was engaged to Eugene Stoddard, and had looked for him in vain all day yesterday.

To-day when he had come she had wanted to drive, and he had told her that he was too busy to spare the time. At which she had been irritated and annoyed, and the scene just described had followed.

She really needed her drive. She was fatigued with her work, and had been fancying what refreshment there would be in an hour or two out of sight of it.

Eastman had gone out to display his fast horse and the pretty face beside him. She was half frightened all the while they were out, being timid about the speed at which she was being driven. She did not like the man, though she knew nothing about him.

Miss Elmore had a gift in the use of the brush, and she was studying to make the most of it. She might some day have to depend on her art for bread and butter.

She was staying with a friend, and under her escort was seeing more of the world than ever before in her life. And she had met Eugene Stoddard; and they had fallen in love with each other, and were going to be married when he should be firmly settled in business.

But he did not come the next day, nor for many days after that. He went out of the house with only a shock of pain in his great, tender, loving heart.

But after a while he began to get angry thinking of the words she had spoken.

For three days pride kept him away. After that circumstances took the case in hand.

For two days Miss Elmore kept the house persistently, lest he might come and she should miss him. At the night of the second day she lost her temper again, locked up his ring, and declared that she did not care if he never came.

Then the next day, the very day that Eugene Stoddard had almost made up his mind to bury his anger



[THE QUARREL.]

and hurt pride, she went out again to drive with George Eastman.

It was worse than before.

The man was gentlemanly enough, but before she reached home she had made up her mind to drop George Eastman as soon as she decently could.

And just as that conclusion was arrived at she saw Stoddard coming down the street with Kate Birch. His eyes were fixed on her face. It was a very pretty face, prettier than Pauline's own even, and she was smiling back at him in anything but an indifferent way.

Miss Elmore turned to her companion, and as they passed Stoddard Miss Birch was listening to him with a flush and sparkle of most intent interest.

Stoddard raised his hat gravely, and Pauline acknowledged his greeting with a cold little bow.

Eastman, of course, comprehended the case. It was quite in his line of business.

And when they met again that evening at a sociable, which they all attended, he was doubly attentive.

Poor Pauline! She danced with him set after set; she promenaded with him. She called out a gay good-night to him after she and Mrs. Howard were in the carriage, because Stoddard stood on the steps glowering.

He had not spoken to Miss Elmore all the evening long. She had given him no opportunity at first, and afterward he did not seek one.

Kate Birch was there, sweeter than ever, and somehow Stoddard found himself beside her most of the evening.

That was Pauline's grievance. Kate was shallow, heartless, and selfish; she would have gone some lengths to spite Miss Elmore, and never a woman had a better chance offered her. She made the most of it.

Two days afterward Mrs. Howard came into Pauline's room as that young person was dressing.

"Polly"—all her friends called her Polly—"I have

a horrid thing to tell you. I wish I could spare you, but you must know."

"If you wouldn't inflict a preface," Miss Elmore said, with her heart in her throat. "I can bear a blow, but not the preparation for it."

"Mr. Eastman has been saying unpardonable things about you. He has been repeating a conversation which he says he had with you, and for which he ought to be horsewhipped."

"Mr. Stoddard is your authority, I suppose," she said, her face flashing scarlet. "I don't believe it."

"You must believe it. Frank Grace came and told me just now. He heard him at his club last night. He thought you ought to know, and didn't dare tell you—not knowing you very well."

Miss Elmore sat silent while her friend entered upon details.

"I did not mean to tell you this, but you would not be convinced. Is that the reason you have broken with Mr. Stoddard? Oh, Polly, Polly!"

"Just you go off, Nelly, and let me get over this by myself."

She was wilful and pettish and high tempered, but she had a good, true heart and steady brain withal. She would send for him and tell him. At least she would not let Kate Birch make her conquest without a struggle.

The men thought Kate an angel of light, women knew her better.

When Eastman drove up to Mrs. Howard's door that afternoon with his dashing white thoroughbred the servant had evidently received previous instructions.

Miss Elmore did not wish to see him, and the door was closed while he stood on the step.

And that was the end of George Eastman's part and lot in Miss Elmore's history.

She waited twenty-four hours before she could get over her shame and mortification enough to write her letter to Stoddard.

Then she waited with nervous impatience for his reply.

The messenger came back very soon. The gentleman had gone to London to remain there. His new address was written on the envelope.

She was not a girl of half-measures. She sat down and wrote another epistle, longer, more explicit. She acknowledged herself in the wrong and thanked him for his warning.

There was not a sentence in it which could be construed into a recall, but if he cared for her he would come.

From day to day she waited an answer which never came.

That waiting was the only thing which prolonged her stay with her friend for the next fortnight. Then, her lessons being over, she went back to her home with a feeling that she had finished life at twenty.

But she was not a sentimental damsel. She had her art, and devoted herself to it with tremendous energy. And, like any other wrought-out purpose, it was a comfort and a solace.

People praised her, which is much better than fault-finding or indifference.

She did not pine or mope, and never once fell back on a broken heart as a reason why she should not do all her best.

In this interval the relative with whom she had lived died suddenly.

It left her homeless, to all intents and purposes, and with a very tiny fortune, by no means enough to keep her without work.

She went to London, accepted the shelter of a friend's roof and a seat at her table, and opened a studio—only she did not call it by that pretentious name.

She did beautiful things, and people began talking about them, and then bought them—which was better. There seemed no reason why she should not go on to success. But there was that cold little aching spot in her heart under it all.

She never saw Eugene Stoddard, or heard of him, more than if he had been on the other side of the world.

It was just at that time that Horace Dare came into her story.

One night Miss Elmore came home through the dusk with a dismal feeling. The late spring had resolved itself into mist and wind and rain. Sunshine lay the other side of it, doubtless, but Pauline felt that she should never again know anything but rainy days.

Her friend Mrs. Marsh came up to her room.

"Are you here, Pauline? Mr. Horace Dare is downstairs."

"Yes, I'm here; if Mr. Horace Dare, or anybody else, is downstairs, I shall stay here."

"No; you will get dressed and come down to dinner."

"Laura, I can't."

"Pauline, you must. He knows you are stopping here, and he heard you come in."

So Miss Elmore dressed, and went down to meet this hero of her friend's, who had just come from over seas.

Horace Dare had heard Miss Elmore's name so many times that afternoon that he had made up his mind to dislike her. She had a "career," and women with careers were horrors. She was an artist—Mrs. Marsh did not particularize farther. That made it certain that he would be expected to be aesthetic, and he set his face against it in advance.

So he waited the ordeal of dinner.

The ladies came down. He bowed before a slender little figure draped all in black from head to foot, with just a redeeming glimpse of white at her throat and wrists, and a handful of purple pansies on her breast.

To-night she wore her crisp, bright hair, that was never in place, dressed high in the old Pompadour style.

The stately fashion, the alight figure, the sombre grace of her unadorned dress, made him feel as if some shadow had taken form and name.

She had changed much since the day on which she broke with Eugene Stoddard. That was her last storm. There had been one steady weight on her heart since then.

She had never been quite herself since she had worn these black clothes. They seemed to shut her out from the warmth and light of the sunshine, which she loved as well as any out-of-door creature that ever lived.

So to-night, the little temporary depression occasioned by the weather being added, she was quiet. Horace Dare found himself, before the meal was over, for once trying his best in order to lift the white lids that kept themselves so persistently lowered.

He talked his best, tried every topic and every vein, and apparently to no purpose.

They were in the drawing-room, and Miss Elmore

sat almost lost in a great arm-chair, opening her lips when she was forced to, and looking very listless and fatigued between her sentences.

Mrs. Marsh could have shaken her. She arranged a lecture to be delivered when the occasion was over. Then she invented an errand to take herself out of the room.

"She can't sit there dumb while I am gone," she reflected.

But it was no better. Dare tried to talk, and found it discouraging. He lost his temper slightly.

"Miss Elmore," he said, "I am exceedingly sorry that you have been forced into such a disagreeable position. I will absolve you from the necessity of saying a single word. Mrs. Marsh will return soon, I suppose, and then I will relieve you of a tiresome visitor."

It was dreadfully rude, but then he thought she had been rude to him in a most unprovoked fashion. He sat down to the piano and played savagely.

"Mr. Dare!" There was a light touch on his arm. Miss Elmore was standing beside him, her face not colourless any longer—the clear, dark eyes very bright. "I am sorry I was uncivil. But it is the weather, you see. Will you condone the offence?" she said, putting out a slender hand.

It grieves me to say that Pauline Elmore had in her the making of a flirt, only she never persisted in any attempt on a man's peace of mind longer than the one occasion that excited her predatory bent.

So that it happened often enough that a man who went out of her presence hardly knowing whether he stood on his head or his feet found himself at the next interview in the most commonplace position.

Dare looked up in undisguised surprise.

Then he took the offered hand. "I'm very glad your reticence has left you. I rather dreaded Mrs. Marsh's wrath, truth to tell, because she expected me to be entertaining, and I had failed so signally."

Mrs. Marsh, coming back, found the two on such ground as her wildest fancy had not pictured for them. He stayed till midnight. The clocks struck twelve as he closed the door.

Reaction had set in in the girl's heart. As long as there was anything to struggle against she kept up splendidly.

Now that moderate success at least was assured to her, and there were only quiet days' work before her, public appreciation and liberal pay, she began to fret a little.

Of Eugene Stoddard she had heard nothing. The great city had swallowed him. To be sure she had his address, but that availed nothing. She would not have approached him without a first word from him if her life had depended upon it.

One day she was startled by the appearance of Horace Dare at her rooms. He held up a great official envelope as reason for his coming.

"Mrs. Marsh sent me with this. I think she fancied that the department had immediate business with you."

"Only a returned letter," she said.

Miss Elmore tore open the wrapper carelessly. There lay her epistle to Eugene Stoddard, misdirected after all.

A little flash of warmth ran through her heart. Perhaps now the chapter of blunders was at an end. Holding the letter still between her fingers, Dare's next words struck her like a blow.

"Do I look like a wedding guest? Because I've just come from a marriage."

Of course she asked who were the principals.

"Eugene Stoddard and Kate Birch. But I can't tell you what the bride wore—Miss Elmore, are you his?"

"Yes," she said, with unsteady lips. "That is, I'm faint a little. Open the windows, please."

He stood by her, fanning her silently till the colour came back in her face. Then he left and in ten minutes was back again.

"I have a carriage at the door. You must go home now," he said, and she did not oppose him. Nothing mattered very much, only to get out of the light and be alone.

Mrs. Marsh came upstairs after her. She was lying on her bed with her face upon the pillows. When her friend came in she sat up with tossed hair and ghastly face.

"It is nothing, Laura, nothing that you can help. I blundered, and now I'm paying for it. I suppose it comes into every one's life somewhere. If you'll just let me have out my lamentations in peace and quiet I will come down to breakfast to-morrow in my right mind."

Mrs. Marsh went away and left her. But she took counsel with herself. And the end of it was that just ten days afterwards Miss Elmore was established at a seaside resort where there was plenty of sand and sky and water, and not too much of the human element.

She was not at all surprised three days after to meet Horace Dare when she came down to breakfast. He was pacing the hall, looking as if he was not quite certain of his reception.

The girl had her full share of woman's wit and woman's recklessness. She liked Dare better than most men. There was every worldly thing to be gained by taking him as a lover, and nothing to be risked.

There was a degree of unconscious desperation in her heart. Why should she choose a lonely, care-filled future when the sunny side of life might be had for the taking?

Horace Dare was a prize for which several young women were willing to smile their sweetest.

Miss Elmore had not made many acquaintances. She was too quiet, too self-contained. She did not dance; she had not flirted. She was dressed in mourning, which did not admit of toilets, and she was utterly careless about her complexion. So she was passed over.

But now that Horace Dare had come, all that was changed.

Miss Elmore rather wondered in her own mind that she had dared treat with such want of deference a man to whom all other women paid such tribute of smiles and flattering attention. She had never guessed in her quiet life that he was so much the centre of the circles in which he moved. And to find all this laid at her feet was, to say the least, gratifying.

Pauline was a very sweet girl—fond of dress and attention, of course, but with a soul that had room in it for more. She had had some sharp lessons in her life, and was steadied by them unconsciously. Perhaps that very self-poise gave her the charm that kept Dare at her side in spite of her careless blindness to his claims on admiration.

This particular bit of beach was more fashionable and more thronged than ever before.

Mrs. Marsh, having brought her charge here for rest and quiet, rather doubted if she should attain her purpose.

But into Pauline's face came something of the old light and life that had bloomed there when she first met Eugene Stoddard.

One night, when the violins were thrilling in the hotel ball-room and the monotone of the sea murmuring without, Miss Elmore made her first appearance among the dancers. Not many noticed her coming. She was with Mrs. Marsh, dressed only in white, her half-mourning permitting nothing else, and was simply pretty.

But Dare saw her, escaped from the dowager who held him, and in half an hour it was settled that Miss Elmore was not to lack for attention any more while she stayed in the house.

That, however, was not all Dare's doing. Gerald Roberts had been making a bet with various other men.

None of them had a particularly high opinion of feminine truthfulness or independence of character.

"Here's Roberts. He knows from his own experience that one never meets in these places a woman who would not sell herself for an establishment."

Roberts did not speak.

In his heart he half believed what had been said. If he was not thoroughly a puppy it was not because any pains had been spared on his education in that direction.

They were all wealthy men—matrimonial prizes. The talk went on, various things were said. At last some one made a bright suggestion.

"Roberts, you are the best-looking, and the wealthiest man among us. I will lay anything you please that there is not a girl here who would not accept you in a fortnight."

"That is too cold-hearted. I cannot do that. I believe, though, that we can make the most unpopular woman here the rage among other women in a week."

"To whom do you refer?" asked one.

"Pauline Elmore."

"Pauline Elmore? Who is she? I do not know her."

"Nor do I, except by name."

They then went up into the ball-room in search of her and arrived just as Dare had presented himself at her side.

"I am likely to be spared my trouble if he is before me," remarked Roberts.

Then he watched her for five minutes, laying out the plan of his campaign.

"How does it happen that we have never seen her? I do not know three other women who carry their heads like that," he mused, and then some one was found to present him.

Horace Dare was sitting beside her, talking quietly. When the other came up he took himself away.

Miss Elmore was in some such mood as when Dare first met her.

Roberts tried all his society platitudes, and found them fall flat. Here was one woman who was neither flattered nor flattered by his smooth speeches. He asked her to dance at last, and she declined.

Then he proposed a promenade on the moonlit verandah, to which she assented. He thought he had struck the right vein at last, and talked sentimental inanities. She did not say ten words. He paused at last in despair.

"Is the woman an idiot?" he thought.

While the words were still in his mind he saw her yawning behind her fan.

He walked her back into the house after that, half disposed to give up his attempt, and own that it was too much for him. He had not counted on paying such cost for conquest.

But half an hour after he saw her talking to Horace Dare again, and she did not look either bored or sleepy.

Whereupon he determined to make her talk to him, or perish in the struggle. But he wisely let her alone that night.

The next morning she was in a corner of the verandah with her work-basket—not that she ever did much, but needle and thread were an excuse for dreams.

She sat there bareheaded, heedless of the brown the sea wind was giving her. He must have seen her there a half-dozen mornings without taking especial notice. This morning he went up to her and asked her to drive with him. Her first impulse was to refuse. She glanced up into his face to speak the negative, and instead said yes.

They rode half a mile in absolute silence.

"Miss Elmore," he said, slowly, "I bored you dreadfully last night. I wish you would talk to-day."

"And 'bore' you dreadfully? No, thank you!"

"You don't deny it, I see. But there are things you care for. I saw you talking to Horace Dare last night, and you did not look weary."

"Mr. Dare and I are old friends," she said, demurely.

He gave her a long look.

"But I think you might be a little gracious," he went on, plaintively. "I've wanted to know you for so long."

She laughed with an accent that brought the blood into her cheeks. No man liked to be caught in a falsehood less than Gerald Roberts.

"You don't believe me?"

"No, candidly speaking, I don't. I have been here ten days, and until last night I do not think you knew that I existed."

Had some one been telling tales? The suspicion gave him a very prickly and uncomfortable sensation. "Miss Elmore!" he ejaculated, just because he could think of nothing else to say.

"Mr. Roberts!" she exclaimed, mocking his tone. "There, don't be shocked. It's the last bit of truth I'll tell you to-day. Do you know how many roses Miss Jones had in her hair last night? Nine. I counted them."

He had nothing to complain of for the rest of his drive. She gave him talk enough, bright, spicy, and with as little wisdom in it as any woman's ever had. He put her down at the door in full view of the eleven-o'clock promenaders, with a little less satisfied opinion of himself than usual.

Somebody portly and commanding and fifty years old met her on the steps. Miss Elmore greeted him with the familiarity of long acquaintance. He was a man much distinguished in literary and social spheres.

That settled Miss Elmore's standing beyond question. If Dr. Gray and his wife "knew" her, and Horace Dare spent a great deal of time in conversation with her, and Gerald Roberts rode and promenaded with her, she must, of course, be worth knowing.

It had all come about in some twenty-four hours, the small happenings that made Miss Elmore as much of a power as she had before been a nonentity. She rather caught her breath at the change in her position.

It did not turn her head. She was as cool as ever, apparently as indifferent and self-absorbed. But she enjoyed it all in her calm way.

And then in a day or two it began to be whispered about that Miss Elmore was something remarkable of herself, did things with canvas or marble—the authorities were rather confused on that point—quite beyond the common powers.

Being already the fashion, it only increased her popularity. It might have told against her in some position of affairs.

By that time the clique of heroic gentlemen who had moved Gerald Roberts to make her acquaintance had withdrawn their moral support.

Miss Elmore was undeniably the "rage," but just as undeniably Gerald Roberts had had very little to do with the event.

By that time Gerald Roberts found himself in a frame of mind which did not permit him to abandon his new interest.

He haunted Pauline with such persistent determination that Dare withdrew in dignified displeasure.

She understood the case better than Roberts supposed. She had not seen much of the world, but she had keen common sense.

Mr. Roberts had fancied her fresh, and he was trying his hand at flirtation. If Pauline Elmore did not meet his six with a half-dozen it would not be because she was deceived by any belief in his sincerity.

"Polly, Polly," Mrs. Marsh moaned, "I never thought it would come to this."

"Don't you like it, dear? I do. I shall have my hour of sunshine and go. There isn't any danger."

"Danger of what? I never thought of any."

"You arch coquette. You have not been plotting for Horace Dare all these weeks I suppose? If ever he should ask his question—Well, no matter. I'm not sentimental."

There was a hard look on the girl's face, something that made Mrs. Marsh uneasy.

"You know best I suppose, Pauline. But I wish we had never come here."

"Don't trouble, Laura. I'll go away when you wish. Are you really vexed with me?"

"No, go and have your sunshine—only, Pauline, be careful—Mr. Roberts."

Miss Elmore only laughed, and went down to the parlour, where she found plenty to say and to hear. She was piquant, unconventional, and with a kind of pale beauty that had its fascinations.

The women wondered at her, and would have liked her if she had not been so popular with the men. The men wondered, too, a little, and liked her unconditionally.

And there was Gerald Roberts playing his best cards to win her good opinion. He was so much in earnest that he forgot himself and his irresistible rights to success. Something stirred in his heart that all his life before had never awakened.

Unconsciously to herself Miss Elmore dropped her mocking ways. She never knew what influence she, the only woman who had ever met him with anything but shallow coquetry, had on all the years that came afterward.

One afternoon Miss Elmore came in from a ride with Dare. Roberts ran down the steps and lifted her from the saddle before her escort could dismount.

Some laughing words about the occurrence were spoken among them, then Miss Elmore gathered up her habit and went into the house still talking. She was flushed with the exercise, and looked happy and well. Any stranger would have guessed her position in the house at once from her reception.

Eugene Stoddard, looking out on it from the verandah window, felt a bitter pain stab his heart, though his wife's voice was in his ears, the touch of her hand still lingering on his.

Whatever the feeling that prompted him might have been he stepped into the hall and confronted Miss Elmore as she passed the door.

She did not recognize him till she was close beside him. The colour went out of her very lips.

"Oh, Eugene!" said she, and hid her face in her hands.

There was no one to witness the little scene but Horace Dare. He was standing upon the threshold. Then, while Stoddard paused, uncertain what to do next, Dare stopped forward to Miss Elmore's side.

"Come upstairs," he said, gently. "The others are coming in."

That brought back her senses. She hurried past Stoddard, who turned back to the parlour, and started to run up the stairs.

But she was agitated and unsteady; her habit slipped from her hold, and tangled itself under her feet, and she rolled down half the long flight to the floor beneath.

No one who falls downstairs can hope to escape being ridiculous except by breaking his or her neck. Miss Elmore did not break her neck, but she was too sorry to accept the other position as an excuse for the dry, hysterical sob which shook her from head to foot as Roberts carried her upstairs in his arms.

There had been, of course, an instant gathering about her as she lay for an instant on the floor. Dare had been beside her on the stairs, but his descent, though made three steps at a time, was accomplished with less despatch than hers. And so Roberts had reached her first, and, as I said, carried her upstairs as if she had been a child.

But a hundred and ten pounds would not do dead weight will tell on a man's muscles, be he never so determined. He stopped at the top of the flight to get his breath.

"Oh, put me down please," she gasped, and he set her on her feet, but his arm supported her to the door of her room.

He and Dare had had an instant's look into each other's faces. Dare saw in the younger man's eyes some reflection of his own heart. He had known more of Roberts's life than was quite consistent with entire respect for the man, but he comprehended the earnestness of that look. He waited Roberts's return with a somewhat unsteady breathing.

The two walked away together. Roberts spoke first.

"You see how it is," he said. "It's a desperate case for me, I'm afraid. This Horace Dare is a good deal more than for me. We're taking the same risk."

"And you don't know that she saves for you?"

"I thought she did till she met you, and I am all adrift now."

There was a little silence as they walked up and down.

"At least we understand ourselves and each other," Dare said. "It will be settled for us soon. Good-night."

And so they parted.

Miss Elmore's sunshine had gone out all at once. She kept her room for two days. It had been given out that she was hurt by her fall, and she did nothing to contradict the belief. For the few who saw her her pale face and heavy eyes carried conviction.

When the two days were over she went out again and faced her small world. It was a farrow well appearance. She was going away on the morrow.

But Roberts secured his interview. He walked up to her as she was leaving the room and asked for it.

She looked at him, met his eyes, and turned and walked away beside him.

They were quite alone at the end of the long porch. He told his story brokenly. It most certainly had never before been so hard a task. But perhaps he never before had cared so much about his answer.

She turned toward him a pale face that tried pitifully to smile.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Roberts, but—"

"Stop," he said. "No, don't say it. I'm not angry, only—just give me a minute."

She stood quite still, while he leaned against a pillar, trying to steady himself.

"I know it's of no use to plead. I'm not good for much, but perhaps if you could only care for me a little by-and-by."

She only shook her head.

"That is the end then. Shall we go back?"

He went straight to Dare.

"Your turn now," he said. "Don't speak to me, or I shall be angry."

By which Dare knew that he was taking it hard.

Pauline saw neither of the Stoddards again before she went away. It was a month before Dare found a chance to tell his story.

She told him then what had been the relations between herself and Eugene Stoddard. He heard her through quite calmly.

"I shall give you a year in which to come to a conclusion," he said, with a wan attempt at a smile.

"If you were to take me now I should for ever fancy that you were half sorry. I shall come back then, and, Pauline, I beg—"

He came back in a year, as he had said, and she accepted him.

They were married almost immediately. It was rather a splendid wedding, much talked about locally. Kate Stoddard read the notices to her husband over their chocolate one morning.

It is not too much to say that these two were as unhappy a couple as ever existed. Kate had dropped her disguises, and Stoddard was not an angel, though he might have been a very passable human being with a woman who loved him. She had spited Pauline Elmore by marrying her lover, and now Pauline had married a man whose yearly income was treble her own husband's. That was the standard of measurement by which she estimated her wrongs.

She read the notice, fancying that it would hold a sting for Eugene, and was gratified by the look that went over his face. She had the art of saying small things which stung with every word. She tortured him now, and he bore her inflictions with silent growing wrath.

That day he accepted a foreign clerkship. He gave up everything else to his wife. He would go abroad and live on his salary. She would command a style of living which she had never attained before. He went home that night and explained the plan to her.

"We cannot keep up this life. I do it for your comfort as much as for my own. But, Kate, a single word of yours will keep me."

She did not speak the word. She was heartily tired of the man for whom she had plotted so perseveringly. There would be no scandal in the separation, and that was something.

So Eugene Stoddard began over again his hope-

less building up of a new fortune, with an ocean between him and all that could make life worth living.

And just three weeks after the ceremony which made her Horace Dare's wife Pauline found herself his widow.

They were travelling on a steamboat. He left her sitting on the promenade deck while he went to get a shawl from below. He turned a little distance away, smiling back on her. That was the last time she ever looked on his face. There was a crash and breaking up of the floor beneath her, and when she opened her eyes, some days after, all that was left of Horace Dare was beneath the ground.

She went back to her work, thankful that she had something in the world to keep her from thinking too much. After a year she went abroad.

It was in Paris that she and Eugene Stoddard met again—but that was not till years after. It was during the days of the siege, and Pauline Dare was doing nurse's duty. One night, among the moans and cries of the shattered pieces of humanity about her, an English exclamation struck her ears. She went toward the speaker, drawn irresistibly, and there, powder-blackened and pallid, with one arm a mass of shreds, waiting for the surgeon's knife, lay Gerald Roberts!

Through all this suffering he knew the shocked, altered face, bent above him, and said some eager words of recognition.

Then she stood holding his hand till the attendants came to carry him to the operating-table.

"Where's Stoddard?" Stoddard said he would stay by me," he said, shrinking away from what was coming.

Pauline saw a tall figure, join the group as they passed through the door, and she went back to her duties with a fluttering heart.

Gerald Roberts called Pauline's name twenty times while in his ether delirium. Then it came back to Stoddard that this young man, made a friend by a train of the merest accidents, and been an actor in the scene he had witnessed by the bedside so long ago. There was a little added bitterness in his heart toward her—he had no thought that there was but a thin wall between them.

She came back to Roberts's cot as soon as he was placed in the ward. And there Stoddard met her two or three hours later. Roberts introduced them.

"Mrs. Dare, this is my friend Eugene Stoddard. He saved my life and as much of my corporeal frame as is left."

She wore her widow's dress. Stoddard took all that in at a glance. He fell in love with her again. By-and-by when there was quiet in the city, these two, who had spent so much of the last days together, found space to speak of themselves.

He told her his story.

"We must live out our lives as best we can. We are not so old that the world is over for us," he said.

Gerald Roberts told Stoddard his story after awhile.

"There never will be a woman like her again for me. But she doesn't love me, and if she were to marry me I should go the rest of my days knowing that I had usurped some other man's right to make her happy. That would not be comfortable, and I am going to get out of this as soon as possible. There is a Leonore somewhere in Florence who is not above me, and if she will take a one-armed remnant she shall have me."

Pauline came back to London, where her old friends lionized her.

She went to work on a picture—a scene in a French hospital ward.

The woman's face was hidden, but the two men were Stoddard and Roberts.

Some time afterward Stoddard saw the picture in a gallery.

He went to London, which he had carefully shunned before, as fast as steam could carry him.

But there he found himself advertised for. Kate Stoddard had been dead six months.

So they are going to be married in January—they being Pauline Dare and Eugene Stoddard.

M. K. B.

THE FOOD OF LIONS.—The healthy condition of the four lion cubs born recently, in the Gardens of the Zoological Society, seems strongly to verify the suggestions recently made by Prof. Huxington of Dublin. The professor considers that it is necessary for the mother to be supplied with bone-forming food in a palatable form. The ribs or thigh-bones of an ox are too strong to be eaten by most animals, and the lions generally reject them, even when hungry; consequently they do not assimilate a sufficient supply of earthy salts into their organisms to make up for that lost in the natural physiological processes. Prof. Huxington feeds the lions under his charge with rabbits or goats, giving them the

bodies undressed. Nothing being left unsewn; the requisite salts are absorbed, and the cubs do not suffer from claff palate, which is the most frequent cause of death, because during development their bones have had the opportunity of forming and extending under normal circumstances.

FACETIÆ.

DONE ALONG O' YOU.—Hardup says his dairyman is so urgent for the payment of his bill that he will bet the milk must come from a dun cow.—*Fun Almanack, 1873.*

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.—There are as many as one hundred and thirty-six applications for admissions as attorneys this term! The Registrar of Public Health will shortly have to record increased disease in the form of citizenship.—*Fun.*

AN OLD OFFENDER.
We beg to call the attention of the Middlesex Magistrate to a frequent offender against the New Licensing Act. For some time past the Money Market has been tight every day.—*Fun.*

AN OPEN QUESTION.
1st Boy: "There ain't no sun, and there ain't no rain; what's that cove got his 'brella up for?"
2nd Boy: "Very likely 'cos it won't shut."—*Fun Almanack, 1873.*

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.—Burr Tender was advising a farmer the other day not to destroy small birds. "What," said he, "does the small quantity of grain they peck amount to?" "Every peck is a quarter of a bushel," said the stolid agriculturist.—*Fun Almanack, 1873.*

LITTLE CAUSE FOR GRATITUDE.
Parasimonious Uncle to Hard-working Nephew: "Jack, here is a half-sovereign for your Christmas-box."

Jack: "Much obliged, uncle. The smallest donations are thankfully received."—*Fun Almanack, 1873.*

AN IRISH STEW.
Visitor (to Irish Nurse): "Well, Mrs. MacCarthy, and where are the children?"

Mrs. MacC: "Shure, ma'am, an' the ladies at the Parsnidge lave got them for dinner the day!"—*Fun Almanack, 1873.*

A SWEEPING ECCLESIASTICAL REFORMER.
DEDICATED TO HIS STABLE AND FRIENDS.

Mrs. Glubbins (Pew-opener, etc.): "Well, yes, ladies! Saturdays is busy days with me. I have to put the 'ole church to rights, brush down the Tea Communion, and wipe over the Table of Affinity."—*Fun Almanack, 1873.*

APPALLING MENACE.
Mr. Punch: "All very well to say 'Cheer up!' but if this sort of weather goes on here I'm for Australia. I'll manage England by telegraph. Splendid hot sunshine in Australia, sir, was reported at the telegraph banquet on Friday night—message sent in an hour. I'll go, sir, see if I don't! (Exit growling hideously).—*Funch.*

WATCH O'CLOCK.
Mistress: "Bigger, you're very late to-night."
Servant: "Oh, m'm, I'm sure it's only half-past nine by my kitchen clock."

Mistress: "Yes, but you mustn't go by your kitchen clock."

Servant: "Well, m'm, I know that's right, m'm, for I always keep it exact an hour too slow on purpose!"—*Fun.*

A FAITHFUL WATCHMAN.
Rector (who has a view of the country from the reading-desk): "I think it only right to mention to you, Farmer Robinson, that I can see some boys—ah—purloining your apples!"

(Clerk—who was hard of hearing—was just commencing to give out, "As it was in the beginning is now and ever—") when he was stopped by our vigilant pew-opener!—*Punch.*

WISHING FOR MORE.
Old Lady: "Wish you was me, Sniggins! why you are always thinking of something strange. Now if you could really have three wishes granted what would you like?"

Sniggins: "That, I'd like as much beer as I could drink; second, I'd like as much beef as I could eat."

Old Lady: "Well, what else, Sniggins?"
Sniggins: "Well, third, I think I'd like a little more beer!"—*Fun.*

LORD AND MASTER.
Charming Young Wife to Master (?) of the House: "Oh, Algernon, dear, Letty and I are going out shopping; so you know you must come in about half an hour and look for us at Vamp's, the upholsterers."

M. of H.: "Yes, dear!"

C. Y. W.: "And if we're not there you must come to Puff's, the pastrycook's."

M. of H.: "Yes, dear!"

C. Y. W.: "And if we're gone from there you must come to Shaven and Remnant's, the drapers'; and if we're there you must wait outside you know; and mind you bring umbrellas, and you might bring Fido too."

M. of H.: "Yes, dear!"—*Fun Almanack, 1873.*

"PHOBUS, WHAT A NAME!"
As a rule, Mr. Punch avoids mention of the appellations of persons not before the public. But a private gentleman has announced a name of which he should be too proud to object to its reproduction anywhere. This is his advertisement in the Times:

I hereby give notice that I will not be answerable for any debt contracted in my name without my written authority after this date.—S, Macclesfield Street, Soho, November 13th, 1872. —*Przemyslaw Waleky Josephat Tchorzowski.*

"My Jo!" as a friend of ours swears, if there were anybody with patience and address to learn and pronounce this, he would deserve any credit he might ask. But we should think the advertiser quite safe. His "nomination" is what Southey describes in the "March to Moscow":

A name that you may know by sight very well,
But which no one can speak, and which no one can spell.

—*Punch.*

THE DENS OF DEATH.

How live the crowded thousands in one hive,
The feeble children and the stalwart man?
How heavy hangs the charged and stifled air,
Where life is measured by a frightful span!
Here babes that scarce have seen the light of day

Grow dim with death before another morn;
Here mothers breathe their wretched lives away
Before their smothered innocents are born.

The air, sweet laden with its heaven-born breath,
Gives life nor succour to this dismal den;
But instead of these, upon the wings of death,

Is borne disease in all its forms to man.
The infant playing on its father's knee,
The babe in rags upon its mother's breast,
The children in their light, unconscious glees
Partake of death while playing and caressed.

Does Mammon build his temples to the dead?
Those Molochs of the innocent and old?
Is life thus bartered in its infant bed

To meet the greed of appetite and gold?
In the name of all that's good, that's just,
That's true,

Let this great crime be curbed for evermore,
And stamp the outlaw's brand upon the crew

That brings disease, for gain, upon our shore! C. C.

GEMS.

He who murmurs at his lot is like one baring his feet to tread upon thorns.

Our hopes are bubbles, born with a breath and broken with a sigh.

WHAT is said from the feeling of the moment should excite but the feeling of the moment.

No man is prepared for the morrow. But the morrow prepares itself for every man, and so prepares every man for itself.

Law is like a sieve; you may see through it, but you must be considerably reduced before you can get through it.

Do not all that you can do, spend not all that you have, believe not all that you hear, and tell not all that you know.

A weak mind does not accumulate force enough to hurt itself; stupidity often saves a man from going mad.

It is far easier to detect error than to discover truth; the one lies on the surface and can easily be discerned, the other lies deeply hidden, and few are able to find it.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

MIXTURE FOR INDIGESTION.—Infusion of calumba, six ounces; carbonate of potassa, one drachm; compound tincture of gentian, three drachms. Mix. Dose, two or three table-spoonfuls daily at noon.

TO WASH FLANNELS WITHOUT SHRINKING.—No woollen fabric should have soap rubbed on it unless you wish to shrink it. Soak it in warm water half an hour; rub lightly when you rinse it out; then rub thoroughly in good hot suds; rinse it out, put in a tub and pour clean boiling water on it—the

more the better; let it stand till cool enough to be rinsed out by hand.

STATISTICS.

SUICIDES.—The occurrence of some suicides which have attracted unusual public attention makes it of interest to explain that suicides have increased of late years in England. In the six years 1859-64 the annual average was a little over 66 to every million of population, but in the six years 1865-70, the latest period to which detailed returns extend, the annual average was nearer to 68 than to 67 in a million of the population. In the first six years the suicides of a year only once reached 70 per million of population; in the last three years 1868, 69, 70, the ratios were 70, 73, and 70 per million. The range in the twelve years was from 62 per million in 1867 to 73 in 1869. Comparing the last period of six years with the first, we find that the suicides by drowning bear a larger proportion to the whole number of suicides than they did, but there is a smaller proportion of suicides by hanging than formerly, though that is still the most frequent mode of exit adopted.

MISCELLANEOUS.

FOREIGN ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS.—Upwards of 300,000, is the average annual sum paid in this country for foreign artificial flowers.

THE UNIVERSITY BOAT RACE.—Oxford has challenged Cambridge, and the boat race will most probably take place on Saturday, April the 6th.

THE "HAPPY BEGINNING."—The first ironclad ever built in Turkey, the "Munkademi-i Khair," or "Happy Beginning," was launched from the Imperial Arsenal at Haskoin on the 29th October.

A NEW VIOLIN.—At Venice a flute player, M. Aloysio, exhibits a new model for a violin. The strings are made of metal, and pass entirely round the drum. The sound is said to have four times the sonority of an ordinary violin.

A MONSTER JACK.—A monster jack weighing 20 pounds has been caught at Clewer Mill Stream, near Windsor, by Henry Vickers, a fisherman. It is one of the largest ever taken out of the Thames, and does him infinite credit.

MARIE ANTOINETTE'S WORK TABLE.—Marie Antoinette's work table has been placed in the Louvre. The Empress Eugénie bought it at a sale some years back for 1,720*l.*, and it was fortunately saved from the Tuileries before the fire.

A FALL IN HORSES.—The War Office will lose 40,000*l.* on the resale of the horses bought for the autumn manoeuvres. Horses, like coal and iron, have gone down lately with a rush from their fictitiously high prices. A 100*l.* gelding of August is now worth 60*l.*. Such is life.

A NEW CHURCH IN COPENHAGEN.—Christian IX., King of Denmark, has laid the first stone of a new church in Copenhagen. The cost of this church will be defrayed by subscriptions which have been given by the inhabitants of the Danish capital. Bishop Martensen officiated at the ceremony, which was attended by the Royal Family, the Ministers, and all the notabilities of Copenhagen.

MR. LOWE REFUSING TO MAINTAIN LIGHTHOUSES.

Mr. Lowe informed a deputation from Chambers of Commerce recently that he could not consent to the cost of erecting and maintaining lighthouses being transferred from the shipping interest to the Consolidated Fund. At present the "consumers" paid for what they required and used, which would not be the case were the proposed change introduced.

TOM MOORE.—One who used to live close to the residence of the late Tom Moore supplies the following anecdote:—"Once driving home to Chippenham from Devizes I gave an old lady a lift in the trap; and in conversation I asked her if she had seen much of Tom Moore in her village when he was alive. 'Tom Moore, sir? Tom Moore?' said she. 'Oh, I see, you mean Mr. Moore. Mrs. Moore were a very kind lady, but Mr. Moore used to write all sorts of verses (verses) about the moon, and such like things. He were no account!'"

THE AUSTRIAN POLAR EXPEDITION.—A letter, dated the 16th of August, has been received from Dr. Fischer, of the Austrian Polar Expedition. He says that the expedition lies off Cape Nassau, and that it is surrounded by ice on all sides. The temperature is unusually low for the season, the sea being generally free from ice at this point in the months of August and September, and Dr. Fischer fears that, unless a thaw should come on, the expedition will have to pass the winter in Nova Zembla, instead of on the Siberian coast. The crew are in excellent health, and have provisions and clothes for three years besides a stock of coal which would suffice for a journey of fifty days.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LOUISE.—Handwriting clear and distinct.
WINNIFRED MAUD.—Handwriting good, but rather careless.

BARBARA.—1. The fourth finger of the right hand. 2. Handwriting good, being clear, distinct and ladylike.

W. A.—The sudden death of James Renforth took place on the 23rd of August, 1871, while rowing in the Anglo-Canadian race at New Brunswick.

F. H. (of Sheffield).—We must decline; it is contrary to our rule to insert such advertisements in these columns.

X. Y. Z.—It has been ascertained that light penetrates to one hundred fathoms below the surface of the sea, which is seventy more than it was formerly supposed to.

A. JONES.—Any communication you forward to our office will in due course and without charge be published in the correspondents page of this journal. No farther information is necessary.

TOM COOPER.—The sketch you send us is neither that of a crest nor of a coat of arms. It is simply a whimsical device of a shield with initials—probably we should say of your own conception.

F. S. B.—Having squeezed out the worms, bathe with tepid water, then apply glycerine with a camel's hair brush. They are common to youth, thus time alone will effect a complete cure.

ALEXANDER.—It was executed by Baron Marochetti, who died in December, 1857. Richard Coeur de Lion, treated near the Peers' entrance, Houses of Parliament, is considered to be one of his finest works.

GEORGINA A.—1. You will find the information you require in a recent number of the "LONDON READER." 2. Handwriting very good. 3. Colour of hair a pretty brown.

SIMONE.—Capt. Martin Van Buren, the Kentucky giant, and Miss Anna Swann, the Nova Scotian giantess, were married at St. Martin's in-the-Fields on the 17th of June last year. The two-headed girl, Melly-Christine, was present on the occasion.

ELIZA B.—1. There is no such establishment now at Knightsbridge, but the "Lion" Brewery (a limited company) is in the Belvidere Road, Lambeth. Apply for the information you require to Henry Howell, Esq., who is the resident director. 2. There is no other "Lion" Brewery in the London P. O. Directory.

JUVENIS.—The quotation is from "Hamlet"; it should be written thus:

"Give me the man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core—ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee."

Many persons misquote a portion of the passage by saying "Heart of hearts," as you have done.

A CORRESPONDENT (Glasgow).—1. If the young man made you a promise of marriage, as we infer from the facts that you agreed to accompany him on the voyage and your friends were aware of and sanctioned the arrangement, you can bring an action for "breach of promise;" if not, you have no remedy, and have but your own folly to blame. 2. Handwriting not good, yet shows that with most careful practice it might be greatly improved.

OLD BROWN'S DAUGHTER.—1. How can you ask us if you can legally marry your mother's sister's husband, or indeed any woman's husband? Probably you mean the husband of your mother's deceased sister; if so, we think you can, but why not look into your Prayer-book, where you will find to a shade the information you require? 2. If the attachment be mutual we see no reason why a girl of twenty should not marry a gentleman of thirty-five, although from five to ten years' advantage of age on the part of the gentleman is conventionally understood to be the limit, but then different circumstances materially alter cases.

R. S.—1. With reference to your former letter, which to the best of our ability, in Number 495 of the "LONDON READER" we answered at length, we are glad that you admit the correctness of our statement, and to a certain extent endorse our opinions; restriction of space, however, must prevent the argument being carried farther. 2. Giving you due credit for perseverance in your poetic efforts, we regret that we must decline the verses "A Line for the Life Boat" and "An Affecting Scene." We agree with the sentiments contained in them, but they are wanting sadly in every element that could entitle them to the dignity of print.

W. F. LATOUE.—"Poeta nascitur non fit" wrote the Latin poet, and of a great English poet it has been written that "he slipped in numbers ere the numbers came." So you

see there is no specified age at which the "divine afflatus" is given to the individual. Remember also that aspiration does not mean inspiration. We give you this advice because we think you have in your two little poems "The Two Friends" and "A Yarn" exhibited at least a scintilla of the ring of the proper metal; they are, however, both too crude for print. You have both taste and feeling. If you would obtain the honour of print supply yourself with a rhyming dictionary, read the best authors in the style you most affect, and study some treatise on the "Art of Poetry."

CIVIS.—It is true, we believe, that the Lord Mayor has an allowance of £5,000, to meet the expenses of his mayoralty, but these are believed to amount to some £3,000, or £4,000, more. He is an ex-officio member of Her Majesty's Privy Council during his tenure of office; and he attends its meetings on the accession of a new Sovereign, when he is the only surviving member of that august body, the office of the other Privy Councillors ceasing together with the demise of the King. Then, as if his time were not sufficiently occupied with the business of the City and Corporation, he is, or was till recently, a Governor of Greenwich Hospital; he is a Governor of King's College, or Christ's Hospital, of St. Bartholomew's, Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospitals; and a trustee (along with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London) of St. Paul's Cathedral; he is president or patron of very many other public foundations. And, lastly, he sits regularly in his own justice-room at the Mansion House for some three hours or more daily to administer the law. As lately as the coronation of King George IV. the Lord Mayor of London acted as Chief Butler, receiving a gold cup as his fee on the occasion.

NO LETTER.

She runs to the window and taps on the pane,
With quick, eager fingers, again and again;
While close to the sash she presses her face,
Lit up with the beauty of maidenly grace.
Then, with a quick shiver, the hand, with its letter—
A plain, handed ring—drops slowly. "No letter!"

She opens the lattice and steps to the gate,
Asking the good-natured postman to wait.
"Just tell me, good sir, have you looked through
And through
Those piles of queer missives ancient and new?
I've been waiting and waiting for months nearly
three;

And have you naught, sir, of a missive for me?"
The postman looks down at the tiny gold letter
Slipped low on the hand, and whispers, "No letter."

With a tear in the depth of her sunny-brown eyes
She watches the postman go hurrying by.
Then, with sobs in her throat and a pain in her
breast,

She patiently takes her place with the rest.
Meeting the words, "My dear, is John better?"
With a smile soft and tender, "Dear grandpa, no
letter."

The morrow has come. With a shy, watching face,
The maiden is there in her accustomed place;
And when on the gravel outside, in the street,
The step of the postman is heard on his beat,
She puts forth her hand with its tiny gold letter.
"A letter for me?" And he whispers, "No letter."

The winters have vanished; the ice and the snow
Went up from the vales in the still long ago
And there, in yon cot, with hair turning gray,
Sweet Ethel sits weeping her lone life away.
Gone from her hand is the tiny gold letter,
Laid aside at these words from the postman: "No
letter."
M. O.

MAUD, twenty, medium height, dark hair, brilliant eyes, and accomplished. Respondent must be tall, fair, fond of home and music.

LILY, sixteen, tall, fair, graceful, and considered pretty. Respondent must be tall, dark hair and eyes, good tempered, and fond of home.

EMMA, twenty-one, tall, fair, considered pretty, with a nice little fortune, would be pleased to correspond with a steady, respectable young man a few years older.

FLORENCE M., eighteen, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, would like to meet with a young gentleman of good position, and about twenty.

HARRY TOX, twenty-three, dark, medium height, good temper, fond of home, and able to keep a wife comfortable.

ALFRED C., twenty-seven, tall, considered handsome, and a mechanic. Respondent must be about the same age, and able cook well.

SAMUEL, twenty-three, 5ft. 9in., dark hair and eyes, and a mechanic. Respondent must be about twenty, domesticated, and loving.

JOSEPH, twenty-seven, 5ft. 9in., dark hair and eyes, and of a loving, tender nature. Respondent must be dark and pretty, about the same age, of an affectionate disposition.

PENELOPE, a domestic servant, eighteen, 5ft. 6in., has dark hair, rather good looking, and an affectionate disposition. Respondent must be fair, about the same age, and living near Leeds.

PETER W., twenty-three, rather tall, good looking, affectionate, well educated, and steady. Respondent must be able to make a home happy, be good looking, and about twenty-two.

HAPPY KIT, twenty-three, tall, light hair, is musical, and would make a loving wife, would like to correspond with a tall fair gentleman of an affectionate disposition, and about the same age.

THOMAS, twenty-two, tall, fair complexion, dark-brown eyes, and well able to keep a wife; she must be about seventeen or eighteen, pretty, affectionate, and fond of home and children.

SOPHIA J., twenty-one, medium height, fair complexion, dark hair, domesticated, and very fond of children, would like to correspond with a young man who is tall, and able to keep a wife respectably; a mechanic preferred.

MADEL AND VENETIA. "Mabel," nineteen, medium height, dark, gray eyes, domesticated, and affectionate. "Venetia," eighteen, medium height, fair, good tem-

pered, and musical. Respondents must be tall, friends, one fair and the other dark, and about twenty-one. FANNY, nineteen, blue eyes, dark-brown hair, pretty, well educated, has money, and thoroughly domesticated, wishes to meet with a tall, dark gentleman in a good position.

NELLY, eighteen, medium height, dark complexion, black hair, and brown eyes, wishes to marry a young man about twenty-two, fair complexion, and tall; a tradesman preferred.

MAGGIE M., a domestic servant, medium height, light-brown hair, gray eyes, and very affectionate. Respondent must be about thirty-six, loving, and able to make a wife comfortable.

J. S. P., twenty-seven, moderately good looking, comfortable means, good temper, and well connected. Respondent must be good looking, a good figure, and generous, impulsive and loving.

ELIZA, forty, 5ft. 6in., a widow without encumbrance, would like to marry a respectable tradesman or mechanic; she is thoroughly domesticated, and would like a husband older than herself.

ELLEN B., twenty-two, medium height, dark hair, brown eyes, and considered good looking. Respondent must be tall, dark and good looking, and about twenty-five.

ELIZA W., twenty-one, tall, rather stout, good tempered, of a loving disposition, and considered good looking. Respondent must be about twenty-four, and handsome; a tradesman preferred.

WILLIAM F., twenty-six, good looking, in a good position, and fond of music; would make a loving husband. Respondent must be good looking, fond of home and music, and about twenty-three.

LOVELY, twenty-one, 5ft. 5in., blue eyes, fair complexion, very loving, and fond of music. Respondent must be about twenty-five, fond of home and children; a mechanic preferred.

LORELY FANNY is of medium height, has gray eyes, dark-brown curly hair, an elegant figure, is loving, amiable, and wishes to marry a gentleman of good position, dark curly hair, nice cultivated moustache, and dark melting eyes, and about twenty-five years of age.

MR. FANNY JANE, twenty-two, 5ft. 5in., dark-blue eyes, dark-brown hair, considered to be extremely good looking, wishes to marry a rather tall and dark gentleman, in a good position, and of an amiable and loving disposition.

NELLY AND JINNY. "Nelly," twenty, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children, and able to cook a dinner. "Jinny," twenty-one, rather tall, considered handsome, fond of music and singing; they will both have a little money on their wedding-day.

LOUISE AND LIVELY NORAH. "Louise," dark hair, gray eyes, medium height, loving, and fond of home. Respondent must be tall, fair, and good tempered. "Lively Norah," fair, medium height, good tempered, and musical. Respondent must be tall, dark, good looking, and steady.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

K. S. W. is responded to by—"Minnie," eighteen, dark, 5ft. 2in.

C. W. by—"Annie," rather tall, dark, handsome, fond of home and music.

BEN H. by—"Nelly," a tradesman's daughter, eighteen, and domesticated.

FRED T. by—"Fannie," twenty-one, dark, medium height, and pretty.

RICHARD by—"Jenny," nineteen, rather tall, fair complexion, Auburn hair, blue eyes, thoroughly domesticated, fond of home and children.

JOHN S. by—"Fair Madeline," nineteen, dark, good tempered, thoroughly domesticated, and has received a good education.

JOSEPH N. by—"S. A. H.," very tall, Auburn hair, a good complexion, dark-brown eyes, and considered pretty.

C. S. G. by—"Emily," twenty-six, fair complexion, thoroughly domesticated, loving, fond of home and children.

EDWARD by—"Louie Margaretta," tall, dark, well educated, a first-class pianist, good tempered, and willing to leave England.

DANIEL by—"M. J. H.," twenty-one, medium height, fair complexion, hazel eyes, thoroughly domesticated, and amiable.

NETTIE by—"F. P.," twenty-one, medium height, a lady by birth and education, brown hair and eyes, considered good looking, an excellent musician, domesticated, and a very good sailor.

NATHAN BN. by—"Angelina B.," twenty, rather tall, gray eyes, dark hair, nice looking, accomplished, a good pianist and vocalist; when of age will be in receipt of about £50. per annum.

EVERYBODY'S JOURNAL, Parts 1 to 4, Price Threepence each.

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Also, the TITLE AND INDEX to VOL. XIX. Price One Penny.

NOTICE.—Part 115, for DECEMBER, Now Ready, price 6d.

N.B.—CORRESPONDENTS MUST ADDRESS THEIR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF "THE LONDON READER," 334, Strand, W.C.

††† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily, authors should retain copies.

NOTICE.—The price of THE LONDON READER to the Trade is 1s. 5d. per quire of twenty-six copies.

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